



WOLVES OF



CHAOS VALLEY

# ALPHA MADDOX

EMILIA ROSE

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# CHAOS VALLEY MAP



*To the Wolves of Chaos Valley Authors.*

## TRIGGER WARNING

**This book contains dark themes, such as mention of sexual assault, violence, and suicide. If these are trigger topics for you, I suggest not reading further.**

## JADE



**B**ring Jack Robert's head to our client in exchange for two thousand dollars.

It was a simple, almost laughable mission for a group of misfits and an easy night to bring in five hundred dollars each, but the two idiots behind me who didn't know how to shut the fuck up were going to ruin it for us all.

I crouched behind a tree, watched Jack tug off his shirt through his cabin window, and inhaled the vile scent from Roger, who hadn't showered in days. If the Chaos hit this year and Roger finally found his mate, I'd be damn sorry for that woman.

"You think it'll come this year?" Roger asked, his voice booming through the quiet forest.

Cutting my gaze to him, I sneered. What didn't he understand about staying quiet?

"I fuckin' hope so." Harold hacked up a wad of phlegm and spat at the ground beside his feet. "I heard sex during the Chaos is the fucking best. She-wolves' cunts get so tight and sopping fuckin' wet. I can't wait to—"

Unable to stop myself, I shot up from my crouched position, grabbed them both by the neck, and pulled them closer. "Will you shut the fuck up? We're out here for a reason, and if you two don't get it together, we won't get paid tonight. Talk about she-wolves' cunts in your dreams. It's not like

you're going to get any, anyway.”

After pushing them away, I resumed my position and glanced over at Vex who was crouched about fifty feet away with a smirk on his lips and dark hooded eyes. Out of us four, Vex was the only one who had a damn chance of getting any if the Chaos finally decided to descend upon Chaos Valley after nine long and dry years.

If the Chaos hit this year, it'd start at dusk, which meant we had about two hours, if that. And I wanted to get out of here by then because the forest would turn to madness, wolves would run around aggressively searching for their mates, and love would conquer all, or some shit like that—whatever Mom said before Dad cheated on her.

But I didn't give a fuck if it came. Honestly, I would rather it not.

For some miraculous reason, it hadn't happened in almost a decade now, and the world was better off. Mates were pieces of shit anyway. After what happened in my pack, I didn't want one, and would prefer to live my life in peace by myself.

Inside his house, Jack unzipped his jeans and tossed them onto his bed. If this man was going for a run, he'd be even easier to snag without anyone finding out that it was us. The moon might've been full tonight, but everyone was preparing at home like they did every year at this time.

“I heard that there's an auction for girls up north,” Roger said.

After cursing under my breath at their blatant stupidity, I dug my claws into the monstrous tree trunk in front of me and imagined that it was their throats. The air thickened, sitting hotter and heavier in the air. But maybe that was just my anger getting the best of me.

When Jack opened his front door, I looked at Vex who nodded back at me. We waited for Jack to transform into an enormous silver wolf, his coat smooth and shiny under the setting sun. Jack started on the needle-covered path away from his secluded home, and I tugged off my clothes and shifted into my wolf.

Wanting this night to be over with already, I sprinted after Jack. Leaves from last fall crunched under my paws. I yipped as a hidden branch cut into my paw pad and split it open. Jack glanced over his shoulder and spotted me, wolf eyes widening, then ran right into Vex who sunk his canines into Jack and pulled out his throat.

Easy. Fucking. Peasy.

I didn't know why Roger and Harold needed to come at all, but Vex insisted.

Once I made it to Jack's lifeless body, I shifted back into my human form and squatted next to him. Roger handed Vex a silver knife with a leather handle, and Vex slid it across Jack's neck, the poisonous silver making the incision swift. Instead of pulling off Jack's head right away, Vex looked at me.

"Take what you want, Jade," he said, gruffly.

Not wasting another moment, I sunk my fingers into the wolf's mouth, dug my claws into his gums, and pulled out his bloodied canine. Another to add to my collection.

That'd make fourteen within the past year, and I didn't feel one ounce of guilt about it. They were from all types of criminals in the Valley: rapists, murderers, liars, and launderers. The less of these pieces of shit there were, the safer the forest was.

But that wasn't why I started hunting with a bunch of rogues.

I needed the cash.

"What're you doing tonight?" Vex asked me, taking the head in his hand and walking through the woods with Roger and Harold behind us, both gushing about how much pussy they're going to get tonight.

Turning the canine in my fist, I shrugged, tugged on my clothes, and followed him. "Going home."

"And if the Chaos comes?" he asked, licking some of Jack's blood off his lower lip.

“I’ll be sleeping.”

Vex chuckled. “For the entire week?”

“Yep.”

“Why don’t you stay with me tonight?”

I arched a hard brow at him, pushing some of my lilac-colored hair out of my face. I really needed to touch it up this weekend, my brown roots were growing back twice as dark as they had been. Every time I looked in the mirror, they gave me chills. The color reminded me of Mom.

“I’m fine,” I said.

“Just for the night,” Vex pushed, tucking another strand of my hair behind my ear with his bloody finger. “If it comes, you know people are going to go fucking crazy at dusk. Someone might try to take you for himself.”

“Don’t talk to me like you actually care, Vex.”

Nobody really cared. Wolves were just as selfish as humans.

He jumped across a fallen tree trunk in our path and reached out to help me over it. “I’m looking out for you, Jade. I know you don’t want to mate someone the Moon Goddess has fated for you. You and I both know that shit doesn’t work out. You should be with someone that will do anything for you.”

“Like who?” I asked, taking his hand and hopping onto the tree.

“Me.”

“You?”

“Is that such a bad thing?” Vex asked.

I jumped down onto the other side and glanced back at Roger and Harold who walked as fast as fucking slugs. The one damn time I needed them to get home, they couldn’t keep up. I should’ve figured.

“I’m not looking for a mate,” I said once we turned onto our client’s property. “I’m looking for money for my work.”

While I tried so desperately to keep some distance from him, he walked

closer than before, his muscular shoulder brushing against mine and his dark, mid-length blond hair blowing into his face. “Think about it, Jade. You don’t even like it there. Your entire pack hates you for your parents’ mistakes.”

“My *father’s* mistake,” I corrected. “My mom didn’t do anything.”

He always brought that back up to make me feel like shit; it was his way of trying to control me. I glared down at the head in Vex’s hands and bit back a growl. One day I’d have his head, just like he had beheaded so many wolves for money, except I wouldn’t want any payment, killing him would be reward enough. I’d be free for real. I wouldn’t have to use him to find jobs, I wouldn’t have to work at the bakery with Jain, and I wouldn’t have to remember all the horrible things I’d done in my life.

I turned the canine over in my hand, the tooth scraping against my calloused palm.

Freedom.

Not the physical kind but the mental.

That’s all I had wanted for so long.

“Think about it... or I’ll make your decision for you.” He gave me a half-smile and nudged my shoulder as if he were making a joke, as if there was no truth behind his words, as if he wouldn’t rape me to get what he wanted in life.

I called bullshit on it just being banter.

After we walked up a long dirt road to a house that sat on the curve of the river, Vex banged his fists against the side of a rotting wooden door. Crows cawed up above, and a flock of them headed south. They shouldn’t have been going there, not this time of the year. It was summer.

A moment later, our client opened the door with his hand on his beer-belly and a large grease stain on his gray shirt. He pulled off a pair of yellow-lensed glasses and nodded to Vex. “You do it for me?”

When Vex held up the head, blood dripped from the gash. “Two thousand dollars.”

Our client stared at Jack Roger's head, upper lip lifting until I saw his stained teeth. I blew out a heavy breath and suppressed the urge to roll my eyes. Damn it, I couldn't wait until I didn't have to do this shit anymore, but now I needed the extra cash. Jain could only give me so many hours at the bakery and Alpha Maddox—I fucking hated that guy—wouldn't let me work anywhere else in his pack.

Fine by me though. I didn't want to see his stupid, ugly face anyway.

If the Chaos did come tonight and wolves went wild like Vex said they would, I wouldn't care if Maddox had his face ripped off by a feral monster. Hell, maybe he wouldn't be such a dick all the time if he did. I mean, he'd look a lot better too and wouldn't walk around thinking he was a god or some shit.

*Fingers crossed.*

I watched more blood drip onto the ground and smiled. Forget luck, *I* would be the one to rip off his face. That'd be the most blissful payback I could ever even think of. And then, at that point, my entire life's purpose would be fulfilled and I would honestly feel content.

Who cared if my pack members would call for my head? I'd give them their alpha's first.

"Where's his canine?" our client asked, scratching his belly and giving off the foul scent of piss like he was a scratch-and-sniff sticker.

Vex gave a hoarse growl. "You got the money or not?"

Our client pulled out a wad of cash from his pants, not even from his pocket. He straight up stuck his hand down the front of his pants and pulled out twenty hundred-dollar bills, smacking them into Vex's hand. Vex grabbed the money and tossed the head into the run-down cabin, then turned on his heel.

"Come on," he said.

Roger, Harold, and I followed after him until we reached the area between their hideout and my pack. I wasn't a rogue like they were, and I

planned to keep it that way, as long as nobody caught me and ratted me out to Maddox. All I needed was money, for now. Soon, I'd seek vengeance.

"He stunk like a motherfucker," Roger said.

Harold scrunched his nose. "I can't believe he keeps his cash in his briefs."

"Me either," I admitted, watching Vex divide the money four ways.

Four hundred, four hundred, four hundred, and eight hundred dollars.

Definitely *not* the share split we agreed upon.

But Roger and Harold didn't notice. They never did when Vex did shit like this, and it annoyed the absolute shit out of me. And if they did, Vex would even make them believe they dropped the money they were missing, completely putting the blame off him.

Once the other guys went off in their own directions with their cash, Vex handed me the eight hundred dollars. I widened my eyes at the cash and stared up at him in confusion. Never in a million years had I thought Vex the Rogue would give me more money than he gave himself.

"Does this change your mind?" Vex asked, gesturing down at the hundred dollar bills.

My blood boiled at the thought of spending the night with Vex. Sure, chances were he was a good lover; I had seen him fight before and that man was ruthless. But I didn't want a malicious thief and a cold-hearted murderer as a lover. He'd steal my heart and rip my body to pieces.

"Why don't you spend the night with me? I'll keep you safe."

I turned on my heel and headed back for my pack. "I have work tomorrow. Jain needs my help at the bakery."

Vex followed after me, catching my wrist. "Come on, Jade. You don't even like that place."

After yanking my hand out of his, I said, "Maybe some other time. I'm exhausted."

I wasn't; I just didn't want to go home with him. But... if I pissed him

off, he'd kick me out of the group, and they were the only people I really had at the moment. Not friends, but people who I tolerated and who tolerated me... for now. My pack hated me too much for my father's mistakes.

## MADDOX



*“It’s still very early,” the doctor said, handing Kylie to me and frowning. After writing a couple notes in his journal, he set it down and stared at me. “Usually we don’t officially diagnose children until they’re at least eighteen months old, but some pups grow faster than humans.”*

*“And?” I asked, knee bouncing.*

*I held Kylie tight and wished that Clea would have shown up to Kylie’s doctor appointment with me. I couldn’t do this alone. What could’ve been more important than her own baby that was barely a fucking year old yet?*

*The doctor grimaced, as if he didn’t want to tell me.*

*“What is it?” I demanded. “Tell me now.”*

*“Kylie is showing early signs of autism.”*

*My chest tightened, tears welling up in my eyes. I held Kylie to my chest and shook my head, not wanting to believe what he had said to me. My chest heaved up and down, and I cursed Clea for not coming with me. How could I break something like this to her?*

*After sliding a pamphlet in my direction, the doctor gave me half a smile. “In a couple months, we can run some more tests to properly diagnose her, but until then, this pamphlet will give you some more information on autism and raising a child with this disorder.”*

*Kylie rested her head on my shoulder and stared at me with wide eyes, grasping some of my hair in her tiny fist. I grabbed the paper and walked out of the room and back home, nerves running up and down my limbs.*

*Clea would be so upset.*

*I unlocked the door and stepped into the house, inhaling her scent deeply in hopes to calm myself down, but she wasn't the only person in the packhouse. Still, I could think of nothing other than pulling Clea into my arms and crying into her neck.*

*Rushing up the stairs to my bedroom with Kylie, I opened my bedroom door and stopped dead in my tracks. My chest tightened. Rage boiled in the pit of my stomach. Clea laid in bed with my strongest warrior, Martin King.*

*He scrambled off her, his piercing brown eyes wide in fear. "Maddox, it isn't—"*

*"What the fuck are you doing with my mate?!" I growled at him, about to barrel in his direction, but Kylie wrapped her small arms around my neck, rested her head against my forehead, and giggled, grounding me to the spot.*

*My throat dried up as I held Kylie close. "What the fuck are you doing, Clea?" I asked, my voice breaking. Pain shot through my entire body, the thought of betrayal making me hurt in places I didn't even think were possible.*

*"Maddox," Clea said, not an ounce of remorse on her face. "You knew that this was coming. Kylie has been nothing but tir—"*

*"Stop it," I growled, placing a hand over Kylie's back.*

*How dare she blame this on Kylie? I was damn tired too, but I didn't fucking cheat on her with her best friend. I didn't ask Hannah to come over so I could sleep with her in our fucking bed.*

*"How could you do this to me?" I whispered, my arms trembling. "How could you do this to us? We have a daughter, Clea. We're mates."*

*Martin scrambled to pull on his pants and shirt, trying to inch by me and out of the room. "Maddox, it was a one time—"*

*But he wasn't going anywhere.*

*I grabbed him by the throat with my free hand and thrust him against the wall so hard that the drywall crumbled to pieces behind him. He stared up at me with those haunting brown eyes, and I had the urge to crush him right then and there.*

*Though he deserved more than an easy death. And I would make sure to give it to him.*



After I lifted my head off my desk, I peeled a sheet of paper off my cheek and glanced out the window at the setting sun. Saif, my beta, and I had been drawing up security and battle plans for our pack all afternoon, in case the Chaos came, and I had fallen the fuck to sleep.

I didn't think it would actually happen though. But people in the Valley had been whispering about it since the early morning. It had been nine long years, and everyone I met was getting so antsy for the Chaos to finally come back.

Even me.

What I feared was that wolves hadn't had a chance to find their mates for almost a decade now, so much so that when it did hit, they wouldn't be able to control themselves and would lash out on any and everyone.

Once I shook away my nap, I looked back down at our battle plans and sighed. If, for some reason, the Chaos did come, I might be able to find my mate though. The Moon Goddess might grant me another chance at happiness.

And Jade King wouldn't haunt me every day anymore.

With those piercing brown eyes sprinkled with hazel flecks, she reminded me so much of her father that I wanted her to hurt and to pay for what her family had done to me and to this pack. Martin had torn this pack to pieces

when he slept with my wife. We had been broken ever since.

But what I hated the most about Jade was her strength.

It infuriated me to no end.

For years, I jabbed at her whenever Kylie wanted chocolate ice cream at Jain's Bakery, ignored her at pack meetings, and even shoved her a bit too hard during some of the pack training sessions, hoping to break her.

Yet she would continue to glare at me with those tormenting brown eyes.

I vowed to break her, to hurt her, to force her to bow her head, so those pretty brown eyes wouldn't haunt me anymore. And somehow along the way, Jade King became my obsession.

## JADE



When I was positive Vex hadn't followed me home, I pulled out the cash I earned tonight and swiped through the eight bills, still in awe that he gave me an extra three hundred dollars.

When I stepped onto the Crimson Hill Pack property, or, as I liked to call it, Hell ruled by Maddox, two border patrol guards eyed me. I stuffed the cash away and kept my gaze focused on the sunlight glinting between the monstrous trees ahead of me, giving Chaos Valley a reddish tint.

Maybe it was just earlier than I thought.

But something else just felt... off.

My body ached. Nonsensical thoughts about mates ran through my mind. I wanted to shift.

Instead, I stayed in control of my body and found myself hurrying up to Jain's Bakery's back door that I always *forgot* to lock. It wasn't like I wanted to sneak in and grab a quick snack after my afternoon and nightly outings with Vex and his crew.

After flicking on the back light and illuminating the red and white walls, I walked to the front, pulled out two dirty hundred-dollar bills from the cash I earned tonight, and stuffed them into the donation box that Jain started to support the children in our pack.

Sometimes the money went to sick children, other times it went to kids

that didn't have much, or to pups who the pack loved so much they wanted to give them a bit extra. Last month, people donated to Carry, who was the beta's son, just because.

Part of me hated that we had this stupid box because pack members only donated to the higher ranked and more popular members of this pack; and the less known, less cared about wolves got shit. But it did help some people.

I stared down at all the money in the container and smiled for the first time today. This month the donations went to Maddox's daughter, Kylie, who had autism. She was the sweetest girl I had ever met. Because she was nothing like her father, I didn't mind giving her something. As much as I hated Maddox, I couldn't take my anger out on her.

A lesson that asshole should've learned.

And while I usually hated the donation box, I was glad so many people had donated to it already. People in this pack were ruthless and bullied people for nonsensical reasons—*ahem, Maddox*—but that wasn't the case with Kylie. Part of me expected it because of her disability, but damn if that happened, I would rip the bullies' faces off. Nobody deserved to go through that kind of pain every day.

The scent of thick, creamy goodness wafted out from the front display of desserts. I slipped behind the counter and grabbed a bear claw for the walk back home. It was only five minutes, but I needed a pick-me-up after seeing Vex.

Once I flicked off all the lights and locked the door, I walked out into the dark woods, red streaks still dancing in the air. I stuffed the dessert into my mouth, taking one big bite, and glared at the packhouse in the distance. Alpha Maddox's silhouette moved inside one of the bedroom windows; broad shoulders, messy dark hair, and the side-profile of a god.

I crumbled the remainder of the bear claw in my fist and let it drop, suddenly sick to my stomach. Was it dramatic? Yes. But I fucking loathed that man for everything he had done to me, a woman nineteen years younger

than him, all because of my father's mistakes.

Deciding he wouldn't get the best of me tonight, I forced myself to relax my fists, thought about how much extra money I made, and found my way to Jain's cabin at the very edge of the forest. She stood inside, staring out her living room window, the red light reflecting off her glossy eyes.

"The Chaos is coming," she said when I stepped into the room. "The moon is full, the forest red."

"Is it?" I asked, not really caring but not wanting to offend the only woman who took me in after Mom died. I pulled out three hundred-dollar bills and handed them to her. "Here. This is for you. Rent money."

Before she had time to react, I pulled my hand away and started for the kitchen. She cleared her throat. "Jade, you know that you don't need to pay me. But where did you get this from? This is a lot of money to be walking around with."

If I told her, she wouldn't like the answer.

So, I pressed my lips together. "Do you want coffee?"

Jain shook her head, thinning silver hair swaying in her face, and pressed her wrinkled lips together. "You shouldn't be hanging out with those kids anymore. It will get you killed one day or something much, much worse."

But there was nothing worse than the hell I dealt with every single day Maddox was my alpha. Nothing could be worse than this. And if the Chaos did come tonight, I would shove my fist into his face, and blame the hectic energy around us.

He wouldn't kick me out for that, would he?

## MADDOX



“Daddy!” Kylie shouted, running into my office with a painting in her small hands and chocolate all over her face. I had put her down to bed two hours ago, so I could get some work done, but it seemed like she had other plans that included decorating the house in paint and stuffing chocolate ice cream into her mouth. “Look at what I did!”

After placing some plans for tonight down, I lifted Kylie to put her in my lap and grabbed the picture from her. “It’s very nice, Squirt.”

“Look who it is!” Kylie pointed to the two figures painted on the sheet, one with brown hair like hers and the other with purple, which looked exactly like...

Jade King.

Jade fucking King.

“It’s Jade!”

I clenched my jaw and picked her up, bringing her back toward her room. “It looks nice,” I said to Kylie, holding the painting in my other hand. “Really good.” Even though I hated Jade and her family with every fiber of my being. “You’ll have to draw another, Squirt. Maybe with me next time?”

Kylie giggled. “You, me, and Jade.”

“No,” I said tensely. “Not Jade.”

Entering Kylie’s room, I cursed under my breath at the mess she had

made. The box of ice cream melted on the bedroom floor and paint was splattered everywhere, even on her blankets. It'd be a bitch trying to get that out.

“Why not Jade, Daddy? She has nice lipstick. I'm going to get it someday.”

After placing Kylie on her bed, I took the blankets stained with paint and retrieved some fresh ones from the closet. I pulled them over her body to tuck her into bed and prayed to the Moon Goddess that she'd actually go to bed this time.

I hadn't gotten any sleep these past few years, and damn was I tired. Kylie didn't usually go to bed until really late and woke up before the sun rose. With her having autism and ADHD, it was damn fucking hard sometimes and I rarely got a few moments to myself. But I wouldn't trade her for the world. She brought light to my life, even in the darkest of moments after her mother cheated on me.

Kylie stared up at me, or past me, and furrowed her brows. “Daddy.”

“What is it, Squirt?”

“Why is the moon red?” Kylie asked me, pointing at the window.

My entire body tensed. Red? The moon was red? I glanced over my shoulder and out the window to see a full moon glimmering red in the night sky, sitting high above the Valley, and a thick bout of fog rolling in from the west.

The Chaos was back.

After nine years of waiting, nine years of hoping, praying, losing hope of ever finding a second-chance mate, the Chaos was finally back. The last time this happened, I met Clea, the woman who fucking cheated on me and the woman who became pregnant with Kylie just a few weeks later.

Maybe, just maybe, the Moon Goddess would grant me another mate, a second chance at love. Maybe I'd find someone who could make both Kylie and me happy for the rest of our lives. Or maybe I'd find someone who'd do

the exact same thing to me as Clea did.

Either way, I wouldn't let this pass me up.

I had waited so many fucking years for the Chaos to return.

Wolves could only find their mates and complete a bond under one week in the entire year. And for some reason, the Chaos hadn't come in nine damn years. I blamed it on Clea tainting the mate bond with her unfaithful ways, a way to punish us all.

Now that it was back, I wanted to find a new mate, and I wanted to find her now.

"The Chaos is here," I murmured more to myself than to Kylie, still in shock. Opening the window, I inhaled a sweet scent that lingered by the house, the aroma so overwhelming that I knew she was close—whoever *she* was.

After pulling out my cell phone, I called Ellen. "I need you to come over to watch Kylie for the night. I have some business to take care of."

Usually, Ellen only worked during the day while I had alpha duties but I needed her to get her ass over here now, so I could follow this scent and find my mate. And, anyway, the forest was about to turn to madness now that the Chaos had returned.

"Chaos business?" Ellen asked.

"Will you come?" I asked, ignoring her question.

"I'll be there in five."

I put the ice cream box back in the fridge and paced around the packhouse, checking in Kylie's room every so often to make sure she didn't take that paint back out again. My heart pounded against my chest, the ache to run outside and claim my mate paralyzing me.

As soon as Ellen walked through the front door, I slipped out into the night, trying desperately to track the scent of my mate through the thick fog and monstrous black trees. An uneasy energy sat heavily in the air today. Something bad must've been brewing in these woods.

When a distinct scent of sugar drifted through the air, I howled in response. Nothing had ever smelled sweeter than this scent, teasing me, tormenting me even. I inhaled again and found myself following it through the Valley, desperate to get more of it into my lungs.

My pack called through the mind-link. Rogues and Silver Vipers approached the northern and western borders, aiming to steal land, children, and women. I stopped in my tracks, both wanting to protect my pack and find my mate.

I had waited so long for her...

A rogue dragged a pup from my pack through the woods right in front of me by his tiny arm. With tears streaming down his cheeks, he reached out to me. "Alpha! Please, help me!" he squealed.

Transforming into my wolf, I ran through the fog and ripped off the rogue's arm, throwing it to the side, killing him within an instant, then scooping up the pup in my arms and running him to safety at the pack shelter, where a couple of higher ranked wolves waited for my orders.

I handed him off and turned back to the forest.

"Alpha, what should we do?" one of the warriors asked.

My mate was out here, but so was my pack.

Somehow, I had to find a way to protect everyone.

"We kill any feral and rogue wolf on our property. Nobody takes our pups, nor our women." The full moon glimmered red above me, and I balled my hands into fists. "We protect our people. That's what we have always done, and what we'll continue to do."

And, so, I ran through the forest with my mate's sugary scent drifting through my nose and the howls from my pack running through my ears. Whatever happened tonight, I knew two things to be certain...

These rogues would not take my pack, and I would find my mate.

No matter what.

## JADE



**W**olves in Chaos are like she-wolves in heat: wild, feral, and ready to mate.

Clusters of my unmated packmates ran through the forest like rugged swines, growls rumbling from their bellies, canines extended far past their snouts, and claws kicking up dirt behind them in a chaotic haze.

I stood in Jain's living room and snarled. Red moonlight flooded in through her small cabin windows, illuminating the room with a sanguine color that reminded me of the blood from Jack Robert's head. I still held his canine in my hand, not wanting to put it down with the others just yet. It was the only thing seeming to tether me to the spot.

Because... my body urged me to shift, to run, to find my mate.

And I didn't want that life. Mates didn't mean anything.

The massive full moon glimmered above, calling out to me to let go of all the anger and all the hatred that had built up inside me the past nine years. If Mom were here, she would've told me that it was the Moon Goddess telling me to find my fated mate, the man who I was destined to love for eternity. But that was all religious bullshit.

Dense fog gathered on the base of the forest floor, my nails lengthening into claws. Something inside of me wanted out, yet I couldn't give in. I would endure this pain all week if I had to. No way would I run out into

Chaos Valley searching for my mate.

“You shouldn’t hold back,” Jain said, holding two beers in her hand.

Yes, beers.

I arched a brow at the cans and smiled. “Since when do you drink?”

She gave a hoarse laugh, nodded to our two wooden rocking chairs on the porch, and walked through the front door. While I didn’t want to follow after her, I walked behind her and took a seat out on the porch, hundreds of scents drifting through my nose.

Yips of happiness filled the forest, along with the occasional growls, the sounds making my bones ache with more pain than I had ever felt. My breath caught in my throat, my heart pounding against my ribcage. This would be harder than I imagined.

“So,” I said, hoping to ease the pain. “The beers?”

“My mate and I used to celebrate the start of the Chaos with them every year.” She handed me one and clunked her can against mine, then took a big gulp. “I know you probably think I’m an old senile woman, but I used to be cool. At least, that’s what Gerold used to tell me.”

After taking a sip, I suppressed the urge to gag. “How old is this?”

Jain laughed. “Oh, dear, I don’t like them much either. Gerold loved them. I have one the start of every Chaos to remember the day I found him out in the wild. He hunted me like I was some prey to him, but Goddess, I loved it.” Staring out into the forest with glossy eyes, she let out a long sigh, and smiled. “I miss him so much.”

My chest tightened. “You really loved him?”

With trembling hands, she lifted the can to her lips. “More than anything.”

I stared out into the forest again, letting the yips make me hurt. That kind of love would never happen to me, ever. It wasn’t like the olden days. Mating didn’t mean much to anyone anymore. I tightened my fist until the can dented and the beer sloshed all over me. It was just a symbol that Dad fucking

destroyed for me.

Jain set her can on the ground and leaned closer to me, placing her wrinkled hand on my wrist. “I know you don’t believe in mates, but they’re real. Don’t let your father ruin them for you. After everything you’ve been through, you deserve to be happy, Jade. Let your wolf out tonight, and don’t hold back.” She let out a laugh. “It’s not like you’ll be able to anyway. The Chaos is stronger than even you.”

I pressed my lips together and glared at the grotesque trees in the fog.

She tapped me on the knee and stood. “You’ll be mated with a nice man, I can feel it.”

Once she retreated back into the house, I stayed outside. I shouldn’t have stayed. I should’ve gone back inside with her, crawled under my blankets, and refused to leave the house at all for the next week that the Chaos resided over the valley.

And when I was about to do just that, I caught the scent of butterscotch, Mom’s favorite candy when I was growing up. It was a scent that would’ve repulsed me any other day because every time I thought of Mom, I saw her hanging from a rope all those years ago. But today, it was different. Today, it brought back memories I wanted to keep remembering.

So I followed it.

Into the fog, around the malformed trees, through the red moonlight, I walked in the Chaos in amazement. I tried desperately to stay on any path I knew, knowing I’d get lost in this fog and with all these deranged wolves frantically searching for their mates. But the butterscotch scent led me away from the path and through the territory that I had only been through a couple times with Vex and his crew.

Before me, two people ran toward each other in glee. I hid behind a tree, placed my hands on the wet moss, and watched them embrace for the first time; their arms immediately wrapping around the other as if they had known each other for years, their nose buried in each other’s neck, the sweet little

possessive mumbles of *mine* drifting through the forest.

This was exactly how Mom described it during her bedtime stories.

It looked magical. Annoyingly fucking magical.

Maybe Mom would've found a second-chance mate if she hadn't killed herself. I shook my head. There was no possibility of that now, she had been gone for nine fucking years, had decided her life was more important than bringing up a lonely child.

The newly found mates kissed each other for the first time, hands all over the other's body. I dug my claws into the tree and felt the bark crumble underneath my fingers, heart pounding.

"I don't want a mate," I whispered to myself.

Mates didn't mean anything. Mates cheated. Mates might have been in love during the Chaos, but love fucking faded. I had seen it with Dad, with Alpha Maddox's mate. I would never allow that to happen to me.

I twisted Jack Robert's canine between my fingers and continued. The further I traveled into the woods and away from my pack's territory, the more my body wanted to shift and the less yipping of happiness I heard. Instead, around these parts, ruthless, savage growls rumbled through the fog.

The butterscotch scent disappeared, a sorrowful feeling washing over me. I lifted my nose to the full sanguine moon and sniffed, desperate to find it again. And while I couldn't pick it up, I smelled...

Vex.

My eyes widened slightly as I quickly ducked behind a tree and secretly looked at him across the forest, dark hair a wild mess, canines dripping with blood, and eyes searching for his prey. Stomach tightening, I gnawed on my cheek. What was he doing this far away from his home? Looking for me? He was damn adamant about me staying with him earlier.

And, if I knew one thing about mates, it was that I didn't want Vex to be mine.

So, I hurried in the opposite direction, hoping my scent would be lost in

the madness. Something inside me recognized that look in his eyes, that want and need. If he saw me, he wouldn't think twice about marking me, claiming me, taking me as his. He'd do it without hesitation. He'd been single for far too long.

Through the fog, I spotted a couple men from the Silver Vipers who originated just outside of Chaos Valley. I stopped in my tracks, my throat closing up at the sight of their tribal face tattoos, and tightened my fist around the rogue's tooth. Before they could see me, I pressed my back against a tree and sucked in a sharp breath. What the hell were they doing in the Valley?

Vex didn't even fuck with the Vipers. They were *that* kind of wild.

"Take the women. Set the land ablaze. Tonight is ours, boys," one growled behind me.

Squeezing my eyes closed, I tried to come up with a plan to get back home, but I didn't even know where I was. Sure, I had been in these woods countless times, but with every wolf gone mad and this dense fog and red moonlight and the nagging ache to shift and let myself lose control, it was hard to think straight. I should've just stayed at fucking home tonight.

"Come out, come out, wherever you are, Jade." Vex's voice boomed through the forest, catching the Viper's attention. My eyes shot open, and I slid down to the ground. Vex seemed to move even closer, his scent overwhelming me. "I can smell you."

I pressed my lips together, Jack Roger's sharp canine piercing the center of my palm. Best case scenario for me would be if one of these Silver Vipers killed Vex and the other rogues that I worked with. That way I'd get more of a cut for the jobs I did, because all Roger and Harold did was fuck off.

Worst case scenario, the Silver Vipers found me first.

One moment, the Vipers were terrifyingly silent; the next, a wall of snarls roared from behind me. Men shifted into wolves, sprinting toward Vex's voice. Wolves looking for mates became vile and vicious monsters, biting and snapping at each other's necks.

A woman screamed from my left, a Viper dragging her frail and naked body by the hair. I closed my eyes again, shook my head from side to side, inhaled heavy smoke, desperate to figure out a way back home, to get there in one piece, to live through the night. The Chaos hadn't come for so long, wolves were too hyped up on adrenaline.

The forest became unbearably hot, fog mixing with smoke and blazing orange flames. My arms, legs, and body needed to shift. I needed to run. To find peace. To find him. Mate. I needed my mate. I wanted my—

No. No. No. No. No.

Shaking my head to rid myself of the thought, I opened my eyes. A Viper stood inches from me, in wolf form, canines dripping in blood and black eyes focused on my body. I screamed, but the sound was drowned out by the roar of wolves.

Before I could shift, the wolf lunged at me and knocked me onto my back. With his mouth latched into my shin, I scrambled back on my hands and heels, then smashed my foot into his snout. Almost as quickly as I pushed him away, he came back, twice as hard, ripping some flesh out of my calf and dropping it to the ground.

Another Viper approached me from the right. Three warrior wolves from my pack ran by me toward a Viper, and I screamed out for them. No, I wasn't helpless but I couldn't defeat a single Viper alone. Vex, his crew, and I had tried it before, and we failed. More than once.

“Help!” I shouted. “Please!”

Saif, our beta, glanced over at me, then a woman—not even from our pack—yelled for him.

And he left me.

He fucking left me to die.

I was an outcast to him, to all of them, and I always would be.

Alpha Maddox had made sure of it.

But I wasn't going out without a fight. I grasped Jack Robert's canine in

one hand and hurled it into the Viper's neck along with my claws, slashing his throat. It still wasn't enough. He advanced further onto me, his paws on either side of my head, his tongue all over my neck, his hot breath on my face, and all his blood pouring out onto me.

I kicked. I punched. I clawed.

Nothing.

The scent of butterscotch drifted through my nostrils again. Adrenaline rushed through my body. I twisted my head from side to side, desperate to see who the sweet smell belonged to before this Viper killed me here. In the very last moment of my life, I suddenly wanted to know who my mate was.

Warmth erupted through my chest as I continued to fight off the beast, the smell becoming overwhelming. Everything about it called me to my mate. I wanted him to hold me, to tell me that things were going to be okay, to be the first person to ever love me.

Because nobody ever had.

And if this monster killed me, nobody ever would.

A growl ripped through the forest, and I nearly stopped moving for a moment. It sounded so... so... delightful in my ears.

After pushing the Viper away one last time, I turned my head just enough to see the one man who I hated the most, standing a few feet away from me. The red moonlight glimmered against his bare body, the fog hugging his body, and those eyes... those fucking eyes of destruction.

Alpha Maddox.

My mate.

Even though I hated him, I couldn't stop myself from crying out for him to help me. But he didn't come, he just stood there staring at me as the wolf inched closer and closer to my neck, canines grazing against my soft spot.

Out of all the damn people I could've been mated with, I never wanted it to be Maddox. And this... this proved why. He didn't care about anyone anymore, especially not a woman like me.

I took back what I said before.

My worst fear wasn't dying. My worst fear was being mated to Alpha Maddox.

## MADDOX



No. Fuck no.

It couldn't be Jade.

I couldn't be mated to the daughter of the man who slept with Clea; to the daughter of a man who went against all tradition, all logic, all reasoning to steal not only my wife from me but my daughter's mother.

All the pain and memories came flooding back into me, my chest tightening at all the heartache I had felt for months after I caught Clea cheating on me. She ruined our life, Kylie's life, and most of all, this entire pack.

Nine long, harrowing years had passed since the night I found them in *my* bed. And for the past three thousand days, I had done nothing but search for another mate to love me until I died. I had searched for so damn long, I just never thought it'd be Jade.

Jade continued to struggle under the Silver Viper. She slammed her foot into his snout, punched, kicked, and bit him back, for some ungodly reason not shifting into her wolf. The sight made me furious. Why wasn't she shifting to protect herself?

Why wasn't I stopping it?

Growling, I bared my teeth at the wolf.

Nobody would hurt my mate, except me.

She was mine to torture, mine to hate, mine to have.

The wolf climbed on top of her about to rip her throat out of her neck. I leaped at him and barked, “*She’s mine,*” through bloody canines. Unable to stop myself, I sank my teeth into the back of his neck and hurled him off Jade.

His body smacked against a tree so hard the tree snapped. He shuffled to his feet and shook off the tree bark, spitting out some blood-soaked saliva from his snout. I spit out some of his flesh and fur from my mouth and stood in front of Jade, lowering to pounce at him.

When he came back at me, I sunk my teeth into the crook of his neck, feeling the veins and arteries in his throat snap under my canines. I shook my snout back and forth, jerking him around like the worthless piece of shit he was.

His body fell lifeless, but I continued, crawling on top of him and digging my claws into his underbelly, his guts spilling out of the gashes I made and onto the dirt. My body moved with ease, my rage taking hold of me. This was how I used to torture Jade’s father until he was barely alive, holding onto life with a string.

Only difference was that I let her father live.

But, for Jade, I killed this motherfucker.

Not because I wanted to protect her, but because she was mine.

Nobody touched what was mine.

After I had torn his body to pieces—until nobody would be able to recognize him—I turned toward Jade with blood pooling out of my mouth, and my canines aching to drag her into my bed and sink into her pretty neck.

Whether that meant claiming her or killing her.

Eyes as wide as the full moon above, she scurried against the monstrous trees, the wet moss brushing against her bare neck. Within a moment, she shifted into her wolf and sprinted in the opposite direction, away from the

chaos and away from me.

Me.

My mate, my prey, my darkness was running away from me.

Rage pumped through me. I growled so loudly that the sound echoed through the Valley, then I sprinted after her, pushing myself harder and faster to catch her. Racing around the grotesque trees, through the thick fog, and over blood-soaked dirt, she was quickly approaching the river.

My mate didn't know where she was racing off to.

It was cute, in the cruelest way possible.

Still in her wolf form, she dug her paws into the ground when she reached the water, coming to a stop. I stopped about ten feet from her and watched her turn around to finally face me, her alpha. A single canine tooth was clamped between her teeth, and her blue eyes were wide in panic.

The scent of her fear was almost as intense as her salivating cunt.

She had nowhere else to go. I had trapped her.

*"Shift,"* I barked at her.

Jade shook her snout from side to side, showing me her sharp, little canines.

*"Shift,"* I demanded again in an alpha tone, something she couldn't resist.

Yet, still, she resisted for a moment, for longer than anyone else had ever been able to, even Clea. Then, against her will, my mate shifted into her human and collapsed onto all fours, naked and breathing hard, her breasts swaying beneath her.

After spitting the canine tooth out of her mouth, she grabbed it in her hand. I stalked closer to her, licked my lips, and watched the way the red moonlight glimmered against her pale skin. Once I shifted into my human, I growled down at her.

Needing to take her home.

Aching to make this pup submit to me.

Wanting her to... to... to love me.

Moving closer to her, I expected myself to grab her by her throat. When I lifted my hand, Jade flinched, but I brushed some purple hair out of her face with my pinkie finger. She grabbed my wrist in her hand, but didn't push me away. Instead, she tugged me even closer until we were mere centimeters apart.

"I hate you," she growled, her scent overwhelming me.

I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know why either.

All I knew was that I needed her closer.

With my breathing hitched, I grabbed her face and pulled her closer, pressing my lips to hers, warmth erupting through my chest when my lips touched hers. Everything felt too good, better than it had with Clea.

And, to my surprise, Jade kissed me back.

Only for a moment.

Then she shoved me away, and growled, "I hate you."

"I hate you too," I snapped, logic and reason returning for a moment.

I shouldn't be kissing Jade. I would never take her as my mate.

But why had I gotten so close? I wanted to hurt her for what her father did to me.

That's what I told myself.

Using my moment of thought against me, Jade turned on her heel and ran into the lake. I should've stayed away; I should've turned around and continued fighting the rogues with my pack. Instead, I ran forward into the lake behind her and wrapped my arm around her waist.

This was wrong. I hated her for what her father did to me, yet I couldn't stop myself.

The Chaos sank its canines into my flesh and seized control of me.

I would punish my mate for running away from me.

After I threw her over my shoulder, I stormed back to my packhouse, wanting nothing more than to devour every single fucking inch of this woman's body. She might've been the woman I hated the most in my pack,

but she was mine.



Slamming the packhouse door closed, I carried a squirming Jade to my bedroom. Thank the fucking goddess that Ellen had taken Kylie to bed because I had needed this night for so long. And I didn't plan on Jade keeping quiet. I wanted to hear her crying my name and had been picturing it for the past nine years, though... not like this.

"Maddox," she said between clenched teeth. "Let me go."

After I shut and locked my bedroom door, I sat on the bed and bent her over my knee. She gasped when I laid my hand on her bare round ass, my fingers kneading it softly, preparing it for punishment, for running away from me.

"Maddox," she breathed again, her voice raspier this time.

"Keep saying my name like that, baby," I murmured, cupping her cheek. After a moment, I smacked my hand down on it as hard as I could, so it turned bright red. "You're going to be screaming it soon."

She yelped out and pressed her thighs together, as if I couldn't already smell her cunt salivating for me. When I spanked her again, she squirmed in my lap and crossed her legs at the ankle. By the way she pressed her lips together, I could tell she was trying to hold back a moan.

"This is for running away from me."

Smack.

"This is for not shifting when you should've killed that Viper."

Smack.

"This is for being my fucking mate."

Smack.

Jade moaned, the sound so lovely drifting through my ears. I didn't know if I wanted to keep spanking her as a punishment or to hear her whimper like

that again. Either way, I slapped my hand across her cheeks and watched them bounce, my cock hardening against Jade's stomach.

"I hate you," Jade said.

Smack.

"Fuck..." She stuck her ass a bit further in the air. "I hate you so much."

Smack.

I grabbed a fistful of her lilac hair and tugged up on it, desperate to see her face when I punished her. I wanted to both relish in her pain and see how good this felt for her because, fuck, it turned me on seeing her like this.

"Want to take that back, baby?" I asked.

When she looked at me, she growled, but her canines weren't drawn and she showed no sign of wanting to run far away from here. She just wanted to be a brat for me. She wanted to be punished more, harder.

"You're going to learn your lesson one way or another, Jade." I gripped her hair tighter and pulled her up, making her back arch. After another smack, she moaned my name. I rubbed my hand across her blazing red ass and pushed my dick against her, so she could feel what would be inside of her later. "Bad girls like you get punished for running away from their mates. No matter how much you hate him."

She arched her back harder, pressing her stomach against my growing cock and rounding her ass. "I hate you," she whispered, a breathy moan escaping her lips, and I hadn't even spanked her again.

"Let me tell you, Jade... I hate you too."

After rubbing my hand across her ass once more, I moved my hand a bit further down, where her ass met her thighs and her pussy glistened with juices. Fuck, she was sexier than anything I had ever seen before.

"Tell me you've been a bad girl," I ordered.

Jade rubbed her thighs together, as if she were trying to relieve tension between them, and balled her hands into fists. She was fighting the mate bond, just as I had tried earlier and failed. I so desperately wanted to stop too,

but I was too far in. I liked this too fucking much.

“Tell me how bad you’ve been for running from me.”

“Bad,” she whispered, whimpering. “I’ve been so bad.”

Her words made me shiver, my cock pulsing against her. I pulled her sopping folds apart and rubbed my fingers against her pussy. “You must like being a fucking brat, Jade. Your tight little cunt is soaked for me.” I shoved two fingers into her. “And wraps around my fingers like you’ve been desperate for me to touch you like this.”

She sucked in a sharp breath and clenched around me. “Maddox.”

“Louder.”

I pounded my fingers into her in long and rough thrusts, wanting to hear her scream for me. She squeezed her knees together even more, making everything even tighter. “Oh, fuck... please, Maddox, just like that.” She bucked her hips back and forth, following the movement of my fingers and getting herself off. “Maddox...”

“Beg for my cock,” I ordered, pulling my fingers out of her, pushing her on the ground between my legs, and sticking two fingers between her cherry-red matte lips.

She hungrily sucked on my fingers and stuck her hand between her legs, quickly rubbing her clit. “I hate you so much...” she said on my fingers, drool and spit dripping off her lips. Her fingers moved faster against her clit. “So fucking much, Maddox.”

My mate dropped her hand from my wrist to my cock and wrapped her fingers around the hilt of my dick, squeezing and stroking it up and down, eyes glazed over with nothing but lust and the chaotic energy around us.

While I hated this woman too, I could tell that she was moments away from coming. And I wanted her to come all over my cock, wanted to feel the way her pussy pulsed around it over and over again. I hadn’t fucked anyone in so long.

I placed my hands under her arms and lifted her onto the bed, setting her

on my lap. She posted her feet on the bed beside me, crouching just above my cock with her hands on my shoulders and her tits in my face.

“Your little pussy is only going to come on me from now on.” I grasped her chin in one hand and one of her nipples in the other. “Do you understand me, Jade? Your pussy belongs to me.”

Jade moaned and nodded. “Yes.”

I lined myself up with her entrance, the head of my cock pressing against her wet cunt. “Now, lower yourself on me and let me fill you up.”

Fingers digging into my shoulders, Jade slowly lowered herself onto me, her pussy getting tighter with every inch. When she had slid all the way down and her wetness dripped onto my balls, I wrapped my arms around her body and grunted into her mouth.

“Fuck, you feel so good, baby.”

She clenched even harder somehow and stared at me with big brown eyes. “You like my tight pussy, Maddox?”

I placed my hands under her ass, lifting her off me slightly, and said, “I fucking love it.” Then, I let her fall back down on me, my cock burying even deeper inside of her. Unable to hold myself back, I rammed into her faster and faster, every thrust making her tits bounce against my face. Taking a nipple into my mouth, I tugged on it harshly.

Jade moaned. “Oh, yes, Maddox! Fuck me harder. Please, fuck me harder.”

My dick twitched, the pressure inside of me about to push me over the edge. Jade was sexier than I ever even imagined she’d be, her filthy mouth about to take me over the edge. “Cum for me,” I said.

Almost as if she were waiting for me to give her permission, she threw her head back and moaned my name again, her pussy pulsing around my cock. I watched her full lips part, her eyes roll back, and couldn’t stop myself from spilling my cum deep into my mate’s cunt.

As much as she hated me and I hated her, my cock was coated in her

thick juices and Jade's cunt was filled with my cum. Jade was my mate, and I'd be sure she knew that by the night's end.

## JADE



*“Don’t talk to her, about her, or around her,” Alpha Maddox snapped at a couple warriors who whispered and stared at me from across the forest. The warriors took one last longing look at me, an eleven-year-old kid, and scurried away through the trees.*

*As he followed behind them, I stared at Alpha Maddox, who left me to sulk in the forest alone like I always did. He ruined everything: my family, my parents, my freaking life. My chest tightened, and I buried my face in my hands, tears streaming down my cheeks.*

*I hated him.*

*I hated him so much.*



*It had been three years since I last saw Dad.*

*He didn’t say goodbye when he left. Not to me, nor to Mom’s hanging fucking corpse in our house. Just picked up a couple things from his dresser and walked out of the house with his black eyes swollen shut and a sobbing daughter running after him.*

*I stuffed my hands into his jacket and walked through the pack, away from Jain’s Bakery. After finding out what Mom did to herself, Jain had been*

*the only person to talk to me despite Alpha Maddox's orders to stay away from me. She even offered me a place to stay and a job.*

*It's not like I could get one anywhere else.*

*Everyone else, even my classmates and teachers, scowled at me.*

*Tears welled up in my eyes. Today was especially hard. Three years ago today was the day that everything changed, the day that Alpha Maddox found Dad in his bedroom with Luna Clea. Three freaking years ago, things took a turn for the worst.*

*How could he do that to me and Mom? How could Dad betray his family and pack?*

*When I walked by Berkley's Bar, Alpha Maddox stumbled out, the stench of alcohol coming off him in waves. He spotted me and showed me his canines. "What the fuck are you doing here?"*

*I glared at him. "Walking home."*

*He lowered his gaze to my jacket and growled, "Take that fucking jacket off. It's your father's."*

*"It's cold outside."*

*Before I could react, Maddox grabbed the jacket by the collar and ripped it off me, the material snapping against my skin underneath. He tore the coat into pieces until it was physically unwearable.*

*"I told you not to wear it." He threw it to the ground. "You didn't listen, so now you don't have a choice."*



*Maddox shoved me hard into a tree during our weekly pack training session, smashing my snout against the bark and pushing into me as forcefully as he could. He wanted it to hurt, but over the years I'd learned to take it.*

*Not only to take it but to fight back.*

*I shifted into my human and shoved my hands into his fur, sending him*

*back a few feet. He stumbled but regained his composure quickly, then transformed back into his human, taking me by the back of the neck and pulling my entire eighteen-year-old body into the air.*

*“What the fuck are you doing?” he seethed at me. “How many times do I have to tell you not to shift? You’re going to die during a battle if you do.”*

*“I bet you’d like that, wouldn’t you?” I said between gritted teeth, struggling in his grasp.*

*“If it means that I don’t have to deal with your spite,” he moved closer to me until I could feel his hot breath on my neck, “I’ll be the fucking one to do it, Jade.” He thrust me away and let me fall to the ground with a thud. “Now get the fuck up and train, or leave.”*

*I dusted myself off and grabbed my clothes from behind one of the trees, pulling them onto my naked body. “I didn’t even want to come but you forced me to.”*

*Maddox curled his lip up, showing me his pearly white teeth and long canines. “Get out of my sight, pup, or I will kill you.”*



An undeniable ache shot through my body, jerking me awake. I inhaled the sweet scent of butterscotch and sank down into my memory-foam mattress, pulling my satin pillow closer and trying to sleep for a bit longer. It was still dark outside.

That was some terrible dream last night. I mean, the Chaos finally returning after nine—

Someone slung a heavy arm over my waist and pulled me closer. I tensed and opened my eyes. This wasn’t my room, nor my mattress, nor my pillow either. And that scent didn’t belong to... just anyone. That scent belonged to the one and only: Alpha Maddox.

Quickly, I pushed his arm off my body and shifted in the bed to glare at

his ugly face—yes, ugly, just like his personality. Red moonlight flooded in through the large floor-length windows, illuminating his dark brows that weren't drawn together pointedly at me for once, those devilishly soft lips that I still remember on every part of my body last night, and, of course, his chiseled jaw that looked sharper than Jack Robert's canine.

I balled my hands into fists, yet I wanted to touch him again.

Pain. I had so much fucking pain inside of me, and it wasn't the kind I felt after a physically exhausting day. If I let it go, I would be letting down my guard and forgetting the way Maddox tortured my father for weeks, the way he made my life a living hell even after casting my father and Luna Clea out.

I hated the tug I suddenly felt toward the man I loathed the most.

After pulling the blankets up to cover my bare body, I let my gaze falter. Except a maid to take care of that overflowing bin of laundry in the corner, Alpha Maddox had everything he could ever need. It wasn't like he was living off pennies like I had before Jain took me in.

Bright lights glimmered from the side table, and I shot out of bed. 11:58 a.m..

How was it that early already? I was supposed to start work for her two hours ago.

Careful not to wake Maddox, I hopped off the cherry-oak bed and scrambled to pull on my clothes. Just as I was about to slip out of the door, I cursed under my breath. "Robert's tooth," I whispered, searching the bedroom. "Where the hell did I put it?"

Once I caught sight of it on the dresser, sitting on a painted sheet of paper, I picked it up and glanced down at the painting Kylie must've done. A thick layer of paint decorated the piece, two stick figures standing in the center, one with brown hair like Kylie and the other with purple like mine.

I smiled, but then I remembered that her father hated me. I didn't even know *how* he could be my mate at all. If the Moon Goddess was real like

everyone in my pack believed, it didn't make sense why she would pair me to him out of all people. We would never be compatible. Ever.

Maddox turned on the mattress and mumbled something into the pillow. Not wanting to get caught, I let the painting go and slipped out of the room, tiptoeing down the hallway with my shoes and the canine in hand.

“Jade!”

Heart racing, I froze and turned my head to see Kylie standing at the kitchen door with a spoon of melting ice cream in her hand and chocolate all over her face. She stuffed the spoon into her mouth and smiled at me, feet padding harshly against the floor toward me. Before I could stop her, she threw her hands around my leg and smashed her ice-cream covered cheeks against my jeans.

She grabbed my hand and brought me to the kitchen, then hopped up onto a chair. The freezer door was propped open, the cold air floating out into the kitchen. Goosebumps raised on my arms, and I closed the door.

“I have to go to work, Kylie,” I said.

“Why is it messed up?”

“Why is what messed up?”

“Your lipstick. I love your lipstick.”

“My lipstick?”

Giggling, she hopped down from her seat again and wrapped her fingers in my purple hair. “I love your hair and your lipstick. I've asked Daddy for some but he says no. Can you show me yours?”

After sucking in a breath, I gave her my best smile and inched toward the front door before Maddox woke up. “I forgot it at home. I'll go get it and see you later at the bakery.”

She stared up at me with wide, glossy eyes. “No! You can't go!”

I ushered her back to her bowl of ice cream, sat her on the wooden chair, and crouched to her level, taking her hands in mine. “How about I go get my lipstick from home, and when you come visit me at the bakery today, I'll

show you how to use it? Sound good?”

“But I don’t want you to go,” Kylie declared, playing with my hair again.

“It will be fun, Kylie.”

“But...” Tears fell down her cheeks. “Stay, Jade!”

Kylie and I barely even talked to each other before, though she always came into the bakery with Ellen, her caregiver, when Maddox was working. And when Maddox brought her down to the town, she would always stare into the windows and wave at me. But her being so... fixated on me was new, at least to me.

“I promise that I will see you today. I have some work to do, then we will have chocolate ice cream at the bakery together, and I’ll show you my lipstick.” I held out my pinkie to her to make the promise official. “Wrap your pinkie around mine, and the promise will be sealed.”

“By the goddess?”

“By the Moon Goddess herself.” If she was real.

Kylie wrapped her pinkie around mine. “I’m going to miss you.”

“I’ll miss you too, Kylie, but I’ll see you soon.”

And, with that, I slipped out of the packhouse into the madness that was Chaos, and sprinted to Jain’s Bakery in the center of our pack. Fire burned in the distance, the fog still sitting heavily as it was last night. Yips and screams filled my ears.

Part of me wanted to forget about work and instead hunt, but Vex was still probably high off the initial reaction to the Chaos and searching for me. If that man found me, I wouldn’t put it past him to mark me on purpose and call it an accident. Hell, he probably took advantage of the Silver Vipers destroying the lands and snuck his rogue-self onto the Crimson Hill Pack this morning to check if I was at work.

Joke’s on him though. I never gave him the real times of my work schedule.

While entering town, the sound of a woman screaming pierced through

the fog. I tensed and glanced behind me, remembering how that was *me* last night and wanting to help her any way that I could. It wasn't the smartest of ideas, but last night I completely fell helpless and I needed to make up for it.

Plus, I had the upper hand.

Stalking through the dense haze, I spotted a woman from my pack on her back and a Silver Viper above her, ripping off her shirt. She made eye contact with me, pleading to help her, and shoved him away as best she could, his teeth latching onto her hand.

Through the red moonlight, I sprinted over to him, sunk my claws into his neck from behind, and ripped out his throat with ease. The woman scrambled to her feet, blood dripping from her hands and legs, then pushed into me as she rushed away without a single thank you.

I didn't expect it either.

People in this pack didn't give a fuck about me.

A *thanks* would've been fucking nice though. I could've let her die.

After letting the wolf slip from my hands, I knelt beside him and stuck my fingers in his saliva-filled mouth to take his canine too, my chest tight. Why the fuck was I even feeling shitty about her anyway? I shouldn't. It's not like anyone in this pack even thought about me.

Another reason why I should reject Maddox as soon as possible.

His pack would never respect me as a luna.

Once I tore the canine from the wolf's mouth, I stuffed both his tooth and Jack Robert's tooth into my back pocket and proceeded through the Chaos toward Jain's Bakery. Muttering obscenities to myself, I walked through the back door, a thick aroma of flour drifting through my nostrils, and headed straight for the bathroom to wash the blood off my hands.

"I'm sorry I'm late," I said to Jain once I tugged on my maroon apron and clocked in at the cash register, hitting the keys that had been pressed so many times the letters were smudging off. "I slept in."

Jain finished placing a slice of warm apple pie in a container for one of

our regulars.

The woman who had a fresh mark on her neck handed Jain some cash, then stuffed ten dollars into the donation box. “Oh, goodness, someone donated two hundred dollars for Kylie!” She held the dessert box to her chest and grinned from ear to ear, not sparing me a single glance. “I’m so happy. That girl deserves it. Do you know who it was, Jainie?”

With my pinkie finger, I swiped some flakes from the pie off the marble counter and into the trash can, listening to Jain tell her that she hadn’t even noticed and that nobody donated today yet. Jain glanced over at me, and I looked away.

I didn’t want anyone to know it was me. I didn’t do it for attention.

“Wait until Alpha Maddox finds out! He’ll be thrilled. He works so hard for her.” The woman grabbed her pie and strolled to the glass door toward the darkness. “I hope he finds out who donated that. They deserve to have dinner with him or something. So sweet.”

After the bell on the door jingled, the woman disappeared into the fog. The bakery was oddly quieter than usual today, probably because of the Chaos outside. I didn’t blame anyone for not coming in; I’m surprised anyone did with what was happening.

“You found your mate,” Jain said, grabbing the carrot cake that was cooling on the counter. It wasn’t a question, but a declaration, a statement that told me she knew it to be true. But... how? It wasn’t like I had his mark.

I would never let him mark me.

“No,” I lied. “I don’t have a mate.”

She placed the cake beside me to frost it. “I can see it in your eyes, dear.”

I grabbed the frosting I made yesterday from the refrigerator and snatched a spatula. After taking a heaping portion of frosting, I lapped it on the cake. She wiped her hands on a towel and leaned closer to me.

“Talk to me about him. What happened?”

My grip on the utensil only tightened. “Nothing.”

“Jade...”

Tears welled up in my eyes, and I didn't even know where they came from. I didn't fucking cry ever anymore, but I was so fucking angry. How could I be paired with such a fucking asshole, with the man who made my life a living hell every single day? It wasn't fair.

Forget not wanting a mate.

I wanted someone to love me.

I had been hurting for so damn long.

I wanted to be as happy as that woman with the apple pie, or that couple I witnessed meeting for the first time last night, or even as happy as Jain when she talked about her mate who had passed away. I fucking wanted that, and I would never get it, thanks to him.

Fuck Maddox.

Fuck him.

Fuck him so hard.

## MADDOX



Screaming at the top of her lungs, Kylie stood at the foot of my bed and tugged on my bare foot. I shot up, scooped Kylie up into my arms, and examined her to find the source of her pain. She rarely woke me up in the middle of the night; she would usually sleep until at least six.

“What’s wrong, Munchkin?” I asked her when I hadn’t found anything wrong. I leaned against my headboard and pulled her into my lap, wanting to calm her down as quickly as possible. When she started crying, sometimes it took hours to calm her down.

And I hated leaving Kylie with Ellen when she was upset.

With tears streaming down her cheeks, she maneuvered herself so she faced me and frowned at me with that big pouty lower lip of hers that reminded me of her mother. Kylie always knew how to get me.

“She is gone! I want her to come back right now! I love her!”

I furrowed my brows together. “Who?”

“Jade!”

At the sound of her name, I froze. Memories of last night flooded through my mind, paralyzing me to the spot. The way Jade felt in my arms. The way I felt inside of her. The way she had run away from me.

I glanced around the room, realizing that her clothes were gone and that canine tooth she had been holding was gone, too. Like last night, Jade had

run away from me again. And I didn't know whether I loved that or loathed it.

"I want Jade to come back!" Kylie cried, pouting and digging her fingers into my shoulder muscles to grasp it. She frowned at me, tears racing down her cheeks. "Please, Daddy! Make her come back now. I miss her. She makes me happy."

After sucking in another breath—a tiny voice inside me saying that she made me feel the same way—I grasped Kylie's face gently in my hand and shook my head. "Jade isn't coming back here today. She wasn't even supposed to be here last night. You shouldn't have seen her."

I parted my lips, then pressed them back together. But Jade *was* here because I brought her home, because I *lost control*. If I had stayed in control last night and thought clearly, I would've rejected her within a couple moments and would've let those rogues take her.

The mere thought made me cringe.

As much as I hated her, I wouldn't let that happen. That should never happen to anyone. I should've fucking followed Jade's sweet scent earlier in the night and protected her with everything that I had.

She was my mate.

My obsession.

Mine.

Nobody else could have her.

"Come on, Kylie." I slid off the bed and placed her on the ground beside me, gently tugging her little body toward the bathroom. "We have to get ready for the day. Ellen will be over soon."

Kylie dug her heels into the ground. "But, Daddy! I want Jade to help me."

"Jade isn't here," I said, trying hard not to get angry at her.

But every time I heard Jade's name, it made me angrier. It had been like that for the past nine years, and I had done everything I could do to make sure

nobody even spoke her name in front of me, and nobody even looked at her.

She was mine to torment.

After marching Kylie to the bathroom, I grabbed her toothbrush and handed it to her, pointing to her visual chart, so she could do it by herself. Grumbling to herself, Kylie grabbed for the toothpaste and placed a wad of it on her toothbrush, following her directions. I stood behind her, grabbing my toothbrush to get the taste of Jade out of my mouth.

It repulsed the sane me.

But the dark, malicious part of me wanted every part of Jade in my mouth.

I wanted to devour her. I wanted to kill anyone and everyone who even looked in her direction. I wanted to taste her blood when I sunk my canines into her neck and claimed her.



Forty-five minutes later, Ellen walked into the packhouse. “Morning, Alpha.” She shut the door quickly behind her and kicked off her shoes at the front door, taking a pissed-off Kylie from my hip. “Sorry that I’m late. It’s crazy out there.”

“I want Jade, not Ellen.” Kylie furrowed her brows at me, glaring over Ellen’s shoulder at me as they ascended the stairs. “I’m mad at you, Daddy.”

When they disappeared around the corner, I blew out a breath and rubbed the skin between my brows to relax. I had to lie to Kylie about why Jade was here and about why Jade would never, ever come back.

I never lied to Kylie, had always told her the truth even when her mother left us. She had wanted to know, and I wasn’t going to make her mother turn out to be a good person. I might’ve loved her when we mated, but I quickly saw behind those bright eyes. Kylie’s mother was a monster that I allowed to hurt Kylie and me.

After I walked into my office, followed by Saif, my beta, and other warrior wolves who prepared for the day with war and battle plans, I stood near a couple paintings of the Chaos from previous years. Examining the harsh black and red strokes on the canvas, I blew out a breath and shook my head.

Nine fucking years, and it was back.

Nobody knew why it had gone away—some packs speculated but nothing had been proven—and nobody really had known why it had decided to come back now. All I knew was that the Moon Goddess cursed me by fating me to be with Jade.

Out of everyone, why had it been her?

I hoped that once I found my mate, my obsession with her would die out. I hoped that my mate would take away the pain her father had caused me. I hoped that I could be a better alpha for my entire pack.

“Things are getting out of hand outside,” Beta Saif said to me, outlining an area on the map hung on the opposite wall near Jade’s home, close to our borders. “We could’ve taken care of them all last night, if you hadn’t disappeared. Did you find your mate?”

I cleared my throat and turned away from the painting to examine the plans for today. “I had some business to take care of, Saif. I didn’t find my mate.” Lie. And I hoped that I could keep my relationship with Jade—or the lack of it—quiet.

Fucking Jade.

If everyone found out I had another mate, they’d want her to become their luna.

But even though I hated her, she was mine.

I was a selfish son-of-a-bitch. I wanted to be the only one who looked at her. I wanted to be the only one to touch her. I wanted to be the only one to torment her. I wanted to both love her and make her pay for her father’s mistakes.

“You’re acting the same way you did with Clea,” Saif said. “Last time you ran off, too.”

All of the warriors perked up at the mere thought of having a luna by my side again. Hell, I wanted another mate too, this whole pack had been waiting for the Chaos to return so this pack could heal.

And the Moon Goddess gave me Jade.

One hell of a woman... who I didn’t think I’d be able to trust as a mate.

If her father cheated on his mate, why wouldn’t Jade cheat on me too?

Shaking my head, I rid myself of the thought of Jade being mine in every way possible. It wouldn’t happen. This was just the Chaos getting inside my head. I couldn’t have Jade as a fucking mate, no matter what I thought about her, good or bad.

“No,” I said quickly and hoped that they would drop it.

Thankfully, none of my warriors pushed it further.

But I couldn’t get it off my mind how Jade could just leave this morning. Without saying goodbye. Without giving me an attitude about something. Without even leaving a fucking note, saying, “Hey, I hate you too, Motherfucker. Don’t contact me again.”

Something.

*Anything.*

Hands balled into fists, I listened to the clock tick on the wall like a time-bomb. Roars rumbled through the thick packhouse walls, followed by screams from children and women. Memories of last night, when Jade screamed out for me to help her, raced through my mind.

Unable to hold back any longer, I stormed to the door. “We hunt. Now.”

When I ripped the packhouse door open, the thick fog drifted into the house. I stepped out into the madness and breathed in the hundreds of scents diluted with the aroma of blood. Licking my lips, hungry to kill more rogues, I shifted into my wolf and ran out into the madness.

The rogues might’ve been forcefully trying to take women and kidnap

pups, but I took them down one by fucking one, moving further from my packhouse, which was located in the center of the Crimson Hill Pack, my body gradually following Jade's scent toward the bakery.

It shouldn't have. I wasn't doing this for her. I was hunting to protect my pack.

But she was also part of my pack, and if I mated her, she'd be our luna. She'd carry more wolves with alpha blood for the Crimson Hill Pack. This wasn't *just* for my selfish desires. This was for my pack too.

A pack was only as strong as the alpha's family was.

There weren't many rogues and wolves around these parts, but a dead rogue laid about twenty feet from Jain's Bakery. With a canine tooth missing and his throat pulled out, the rogue laid in a puddle of his own blood with Jade's scent all over his body. I growled slightly, the smell of her bringing back memories of last night when I inhaled her scent and thrust myself into her for the first time.

She had felt better in my arms and in my bed than Clea ever did.

"There is a rogue at the border, not violent," Saif barked.

After glancing at the fogged-up windows of the bakery one last time, I followed Saif toward the borders where at least ten of my men stood on guard, eyeing the seemingly safe rogue. Amidst the chaos, the fog, and the red moonlight, he spotted me and walked a couple feet closer, with his canines and claws drawn as if he would attack if we did something wrong.

He shifted into his human, standing naked with his dirty-blond hair sticking to his forehead, clouted with blood. "Where's Jade?" the rogue asked, baring his bloody teeth at me.

"Why're you looking for Jade?" Saif asked, saying her name, which was only meant for me. "What use is she to you?"

"I'm going to take her off your hands."

Something inside of me snapped, rage pumped through my body.

"No," I growled, my voice more feral than ever before.

My warriors glanced over at me in surprise. Fuck.

Everyone in this pack knew I'd trade Jade away in a heartbeat; I didn't want anyone like her in my pack. And even though Jade wasn't supposed to mean anything to me, I couldn't help but ache to wrap my hands around this rogue's neck and kill him for wanting to take her.

"Your pack doesn't respect her," the rogue said. "So I will."

Claws extending, I approached him slowly with the ache to rip out his throat and set it at Jade's feet, showing her that this man who wanted her was worthless and that I was the only one who could keep her. "And how will a scum like you respect her?"

"She deserves more than the pack she grew up in, the pack that has bullied her for the past nine years. I'll give her more and everything else that she fucking wants. She will be mine."

When those last few words escaped his scarred mouth, I had the urge to lunge forward.

But I held myself back. I did it so my pack wouldn't suspect anything. If they found out that I had a mate and I had refused to mark her, they'd be so fucking disappointed.

"Get off my fucking property right now, or I'll kill you," I seethed.

After glaring at me for a couple more moments, the rogue shifted into a pathetic blond wolf, and ran off my property into the madness. As much as I wanted to deny the rogue's words, I couldn't.

Everything he fucking said was the complete truth. Jade deserved better than this pack, than me after what I had done to her these past few years. I blamed her for her father's mistakes, but I couldn't accept her as a mate.

Still, I wouldn't let anyone else have her either. Especially not a filthy rogue.

"What was that about?" Saif asked from my side.

I growled and turned around. "Nothing."

Honestly...

I was terrified that Jade would hurt me too.

I was terrified that she'd cheat on me.

I was terrified that she'd leave me broken.

If she broke me, then she'd break Kylie too. Kylie loved her more than I realized.

When I was about to shift and run off the property to kill more rogues, someone shouted my name from across the forest.

“Alpha!” Ellen ran up to me with her chest heaving up and down, eyes wide in fear and more tears than Kylie’s tears this morning, racing down her cheeks. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. I turned away for one moment to take the cookies out of the oven, and Kylie just...”

“Kylie what?”

“She... she disappeared.”

Everything around me suddenly slowed down. My chest tightened. She could be anywhere in this forest by now, and there were rogues crawling all over, people who would take her in a second. If they found her, they'd kill my daughter.

## JADE



“*J*ade!”

With two tiny palms posted against the glass door, Kylie struggled to push it open. When she could slip her body in through the door, she padded over to me with a wide grin on her face. Someone must’ve wiped the chocolate ice cream off her face this morning.

“Can you show me your lipstick now?”

I placed my phone down on the counter and furrowed my brows, getting Kylie her usual bowl of chocolate ice cream, though she shouldn’t have any more after her breakfast fit for an alpha this morning. “Where is Ellen or Maddox?”

Kylie took the bowl in two hands and walked over to a table. “I came here by myself.”

My eyes widened, and I wanted to scold her. It was madness outside today, absolute madness, and she was the alpha’s only daughter. If one of the Silver Vipers found her, they could kill or kidnap that girl. Where the hell had Ellen gone?

“You can’t come here by yourself, Kylie,” I said, gentler than I thought I would. “It’s dark outside and there are bad people roaming near our land right now. Something could’ve happened to you.”

She stared up at me with big, wide eyes. “I’m sorry. Are you mad?”

Grabbing a bear claw for myself, I walked around the marble counter and crouched in front of her. “No, I’m not mad at you. I care about you. I don’t want anything to happen to you, and neither does anyone else in this pack. You’re the alpha’s daughter and so special to us.”

Kylie reached for the spoon in my hand. “But I couldn’t wait anymore to see you and your lipstick.”

After getting the okay from Jain, I sat across from Kylie at a table.

She swung her legs back and forth, stuffing her face with a heaping scoop of ice cream and smiling. “Do you have it? I want to see. I love your lipstick. You haven’t put more on since this morning.”

I cut my gaze to Jain, hoping that she didn’t hear that, because I did not want anyone to know I had been over Alpha Maddox’s house today. It was bad enough I was mated to that man, if people found out I had slept with him, I wouldn’t hear the end of it.

Thankfully, Jain had her back turned.

“Please! Please! Please!”

Wanting to calm her down, I pulled the lipstick from my pocket that I retrieved from the backroom earlier. This was my expensive makeup and while I didn’t want Kylie to have a meltdown, I didn’t want her using it all up, because it cost so much damn money. I didn’t just have loads of cash floating around. I had to see Vex to get anything.

“Here,” I said, giving it to her anyway.

After placing her spoon down, she wiped her ice-cream covered mouth with her hand and took the stick from me. I could wipe that down later, I hoped. Once she uncapped it, she twisted the button until the entire strawberry-colored stick came out, then rubbed it against her lips.

“Can I see what it looks like?”

I pulled up the camera on my phone and traded my phone for the lipstick, quickly wiping off the lipstick from the top and the cap with a napkin. Kylie stared at the phone with her brows furrowed together, suddenly silent.

“You look good, Kylie.”

She looked up at me, afraid, then back down at the screen.

“Jade? Is that you?” someone said through the phone.

*Oh, no.*

*Oh, no. Oh, no. Oh, no. Oh, no.*

I snatched the phone from Kylie and stared at Vex through the video call, my breath caught in the back of my throat and my lipstick falling from my fingers. Kylie must’ve tapped a notification or Vex must’ve called or something.

This was bad. Really bad.

“Where are you?” Vex said. “I want to see you.”

“I’ll see you soon, Vex! I’m busy right now.”

“Where are you?” he repeated.

“I gotta go! Bye.”

And, with that, I shut off the phone and hugged it to my chest, my heart thrashing against my rib cage. To calm my nerves, I grabbed the bear claw from the table and stuffed it into my mouth, flakes from the baked good decorating my lap. My gaze scanned the darkness outside the windows for him. That crazy motherfucker was probably on pack property, waiting for me to come out so he could mark me.

When the kettle whistled in the back, I jumped in my seat and cursed.

“Can I see the lipstick again?” Kylie asked.

“No,” I said. “Not now.”

A large figure appeared through the fog, and I had the urge to run far away from here. But when Maddox looked into the window, I couldn’t get myself to move from the spot. He threw the door open and rushed into the room.

Before I knew it, he had scooped Kylie up into his arms and held her tight to his chest. “Where have you been? Ellen has been looking everywhere for you. You can’t leave the house whenever you want to, Kylie.” He put her

down, angry eyes fading into those warm ones I saw a glimpse of last night, and brushed his thumb against her lower lip. “And why do you have lipstick on?”

“Daddy!” Kylie shoved his hand away. “You’re going to mess it up! Jade gave me some.”

When I looked up at him, he was already staring at me. I sucked in a sharp breath, wanting to be pissed at him but only feeling that pull I felt last night again. And... I hated it so much. Why was I acting this way?

Clarissa and Charlie, two twin sisters who *loved* flirting with Maddox, walked into the bakery, their necks without a mark and their blonde hair pin-needle straight. Charlie looked over and grinned, Kylie going quiet again.

“Hi, Alpha!”

I balled my hands into fists underneath the table, wanting to rip her perfect face off. She made my life hell in high school, wanting to get on Maddox’s good side because he didn’t like me much either.

“Hey,” was Maddox’s only response as he turned back to Kylie. “We have to get that makeup off you.”

Instead of throwing a fit, Kylie shook her head in refusal and looked over at Clarissa and Charlie, who were browsing the baked goods, and making it so damn obvious that those weren’t the only things they were checking out, their sights set on Maddox.

“You can’t be wearing stuff like that. You’re not old enough,” Maddox continued.

“Jade does it,” Kylie said.

“Jade is older.”

“But don’t you think it makes Jade look pretty?”

Maddox tensed and glanced over at me once more, those brown eyes flashing gold. The pulse in his neck quickened, canines poking out from under his lips. I didn’t know what I wanted him to say, but goddess, I wanted him to say something.

“Yes,” Maddox said, turning back toward Kylie. “She looks nice.”

*Nice?* That was all? I just looked... nice?

Clarissa squealed by the counter. “Oh my Goddess! Who donated this?”

Maddox glanced over his shoulder at them. Clarissa pulled the donation box off the counter and stared at the money inside of it. “There’s like over two hundred dollars in here, overnight! I don’t think anyone has donated that much ever.”

Charlie smacked her sister’s arm and shushed her, cheeks flushing. “You don’t have to make a big deal out of it. It was only a couple hundred. I’ll make that back in no time. It’s nothing...” She glanced over at Maddox. “Really.”

My eyes widened, claws sinking into my palms and chest tightening until I could barely breathe. Charlie was taking fucking credit for something that I did, *me*, not fucking her. She was using this to try to get closer to *my mate*.

“You donated that to Kylie?” Alpha Maddox asked.

Charlie stalked closer to Maddox and placed her hand on his bicep, her painted yellow claws digging into his muscle. “Of course. I’d do anything for Kylie.”

Funny fucking thing was that Charlie hadn’t looked at Kylie once yet today.

I wanted to say something, to really rip her face off, but... I didn’t want Alpha Maddox to know that it was me who donated. I hated that man and he hated me, and that was all there was between us. If I told him, he’d think I was sucking up to him after I found out we were mates.

Hell fucking no.

But I didn’t like that this bitch was lying to get closer to Maddox.

Maddox painted a soft smile on his lips. “Thank you.”

Glaring at the black and white checkered floor, I tightened my fists, my cheeks flaming with anger. Charlie moved closer and grinned up at Maddox, drawing a finger down the side of her neck. And when Maddox glanced

down at it, at the spot where wolves marked each other, I couldn't stop myself from growling.

Everyone glanced over at me, even Maddox.

I wouldn't put it past that man to mark someone else, so he didn't have to be with me.

He cleared his throat and picked Kylie off the chair, holding her in his strong tan arms. "Why don't you thank Charlie?"

Kylie stared at Charlie with wide eyes and shook her head. "No."

"You have to thank people when they do nice things for you."

Instead of responding, Kylie wrapped her arms around his neck and looked over his shoulder at me with a frown.

"Oh, don't worry about it, Maddox! She doesn't need to thank me. I did it out of the goodness of my heart. Not so this could become a whole ordeal," Charlie lied through her annoying straight white teeth.

Maddox wrapped one arm around Kylie's torso and cleared his throat. "Well, I want to thank you in some way. Why don't you and your sister"—he glanced at Clarissa—"come over for dinner one night this week?"

My heart dropped, my body tingling in anger.

No. This wasn't supposed to fucking happen. They didn't do anything.

"We would love that!" Charlie and Clarissa said simultaneously, grabbing their boxes of goods from the counter and grinning up at my mate, my *fucking* mate.

"No!" Kylie finally spoke up. "I don't want them to come over."

"Kylie, be nice," Maddox scolded.

"I don't want them to come over! I want Jade to come over again! Not them!"

Everyone inside the bakery sucked in a collective breath, the only sounds coming from the calm coffee-house playlist I created for Jain, and the growls in the forest. Charlie and Clarissa looked over at us with wide eyes, Jain stopped mid-wipe near the counter, and Maddox tensed.

“I want her to come over tonight!” Kylie continued. “I want to see her more! I love Jade. I love her lipstick too!”

Wanting Kylie not to spill any more of my secrets, I handed her the lipstick—even though it cost me so freaking much—and she wrapped her tiny fingers around it. Giving her my best smile, I told her that it was hers now, tied my apron tighter around my waist, and hurried to the backroom, not wanting any more of this attention.

And the entire walk back, I could feel Maddox’s gaze burning into my back.

When I found a quiet room, I shut the door and paced around, vowing that I wouldn’t lose control like I had last night. But how the fuck could Maddox believe Charlie donated that money? They were known fucking liars, and he just invited her and her sister over to his house?

I smashed my fist right through the wall, pieces of drywall falling to the ground.

What the fuck was that? Was he that blind?

A few moments later, someone knocked on the door, and Jain peeked her head into the room. “Jade?”

Refusing to show her the hot angry tears in my eyes, I turned my back to her. “I don’t want to talk.”

She shut the door behind her and shuffled closer, placing a fragile hand on my back. “You donated that money, didn’t you?”

I didn’t respond.

If I opened my mouth, I feared that I would cry out. That would make me weak, and I wasn’t weak, especially for Maddox.

“And Maddox is your mate, isn’t he?”

A tear slid down my cheek, and as soon as I wiped it away, more fell. Unable to stop myself, I twirled around and collapsed into her embrace, pulling her tight to me. “Why does this have to happen to me? Why does he have to be my mate?”

She curled me into a hug and gently rubbed my back. “The Moon Goddess wants to repair this pack and heal it from what Luna Clea did to Alpha Maddox.”

“If the Moon Goddess wanted this pack to heal, she would’ve paired Maddox with someone more than me. I’m nothing to him and all our other packmates. He’s made sure that they don’t associate with me, look at me, care about me. I’m nothing, Jain. Nothing.”

“Oh, dear, don’t you say that.” She pulled away, took my face in her hands, and swiped the tears off my cheeks with her fragile thumbs. “You are the most hardworking, caring, young woman that I have ever known. You are both broken people, and—even if you don’t believe in her—the Moon Goddess paired you together for a reason. You’re bound to do great things in this world, Jade, with Maddox by your side.”

## MADDOX



*My fist collided with Martin King's mouth, the skin on my knuckles ripping open. I had been beating the shit out of Martin for the past week since I found him in my bed with my mate, and I hadn't let up once.*

*"Maddox," Saif said to me, opening the cell doors. With a grim look on his face, he gestured outside of the prison. "We need to talk."*

*"We can talk here," I growled at him, and stared at Martin who stood in front of me, chained up in silver with blood gushing down his face from his nose and two swollen black eyes.*

*Saif snarled at Martin, "I don't think—"*

*"Here," I roared, my bloody knuckles healing quickly. "And make it quick."*

*"Hannah hung herself," Saif said.*

*I stopped mid-kick and stiffened, my chest tightening. "What?"*

*Saif cleared his throat and shifted uncomfortably from foot to foot. "Hannah King was found hanging in her home a couple moments ago. She's pronounced dead and she's left a note for Martin."*

*My throat closed up. "Who knows?"*

*"Nobody except Jain and the doctor."*

*"Jade?"*

*“As far as I know, she doesn’t know.”*

*After shutting the prison doors, I hurried outside and toward Hannah King’s home. I spotted Jade across the forest and some of my strongest warriors staring at her and whispering about how worthless they thought her parents were for ruining the sacred mate bond.*

*Rage rushing through me, I snapped at them, “Don’t talk to her, about her, or around her.”*

*As much as I fucking hated Jade King’s family, I didn’t want Jade to hear that shit, especially not now. The warriors took one last long look at her, and I growled again. They scurried away through the trees as I followed them with my canines drawn.*

*“Shut your fucking mouth around Jade, and make sure everyone else does too.”*

*Once they bowed their heads and apologized, I made a beeline for Martin and Hannah King’s house. The front door was open, and Jain from the bakery stood in the doorway with tears flowing down her wrinkled cheeks.*

*“What happened?” I asked.*

*“Alpha!” she cried. “I... I knew how badly Hannah was taking this entire thing, so I brought some muffins to her. She didn’t answer the door, and...” She placed a hand to her mouth and cried out, “I found her... hanging inside the house. Thank the goddess that Jade wasn’t home.”*

*I pressed my lips together, heart pounding, and stepped into the house.*

*Bile rose in my throat, but I swallowed it.*

*Hannah still hung from a rope in the center of her living room, feet dangling off the ground and skin pale. Streaks of mascara had dried on her cheeks, and her mate’s mark was a bright red on her neck.*

*Taking a steady seat on their couch, I stared up at her and bit back a sob. My fingers shook. In all my years as an alpha, all those years of wars where wolves died left and right, I had never, ever experienced something like this before.*

*Saif stepped into the room beside me. “What should we do?”*

*Jade’s scent drifted through my nose, and I stiffened and glanced behind me at the front door. Through the window, I watched Jain grab Jade’s shoulder to hold her back, but Jade slipped away from her and into the house.*

*She stared at her mother with wide eyes and stumbled back. “Mom?”*

*“Get her out of here,” I snapped, not wanting her to see this.*

*Saif grabbed Jade by the arm and pulled her away, but Jade yanked herself out of his hold and sprinted over to her mom, wrapping her arms around her legs, tears streaming down her face. “She’s so cold. Why is my mom so cold?” she asked me.*

*I couldn’t look her in the face. I couldn’t do it.*

*“Release Martin,” I said to Saif.*

*As much as I hated that son-of-a-bitch, I couldn’t have Jade grow up without anyone.*

*Saif widened his eyes. “Are you sure?”*

*“Do it, Saif,” I snapped. “And take Hannah down.”*



When Saif stepped out from the trees, I pulled myself out of my daydream on the porch steps and straightened my back. All I wanted was a moment of peace when I wasn’t haunted by the past or being hounded by Kylie.

I loved her so much, but damn it was hard sometimes and tiring. It was hard to deal with all this shit alone.

“What is it?” I asked Saif.

“About twenty rogues just stepped onto our property, coming from the west,” Saif said, standing at my front door and wiping some blood from his chin. “You need to get out here. There’s so fucking many of them. I’m not sure we’ll be able to hold them all off without you.”

Howls echoed throughout the forest, and my chest tightened. Since Hannah King committed suicide, I hated the thought of any of my pack members dying when I could help them. Throughout this entire Chaos, I had done my fucking best to make sure that all my pack members were safe.

But these howls were harrowing.

Kylie stood by my side, her arms around my thigh, her gaze on Saif's feet, and little whimpers coming from her mouth. I picked her up and began to shut the door, wanting to put as much space between Kylie and the Chaos. "I'll be out as soon as Ellen gets here."

"Please, Daddy!" Kylie cried once Saif left.

I rubbed a hand over my face, being so tired, so fucking tired, and shook my head at Kylie. "No, Kylie. Ellen is coming over and you're going to be good for her. There will be no crying, and there will be no running out on her again. We've been over this about twenty times today. Please, listen to me."

"I want to see Jade!" Kylie cried. "I miss her! You made her upset at the bakery."

While I loved relishing in Jade's pain, today I felt off about it. After I told Charlie and Clarissa to come over, Jade couldn't even look me in the eye, and she didn't even give me any kind of sassy response like she usually did. I got nothing from her, and I didn't like that.

"I didn't make her upset, Kylie."

"Yes, you did!" Kylie pouted. "You were mean to her, Daddy."

"Kylie," I scolded, letting my anger get the best of me.

Even if I did make Jade upset, I didn't care. She walked out on me this morning without even saying goodbye. She didn't care about me, just like I didn't care about her. Why should I care about how she felt? We weren't planning on mating with each other.

From the moment I laid my gaze upon her during the first night of the Chaos, I planned on rejecting her.

Yes. Yes, I did. And nobody would tell me otherwise.

Except... there was a nagging feeling in the pit of my stomach.

After guiding Kylie to the bathroom, I handed her the toothbrush. Still whining, she took it from my hand and followed her visual chart that she used every morning and night to prepare for bed. Once she finally settled into her routine, I pulled out my phone and opened my text messages to Ellen.

Right as I was about to send her a message, asking where she was, the phone buzzed in my hand. "Hi, Alpha," Ellen said on the other end. "I won't be able to make it. I found my mate. I'm sorry. If it were any other night, I would. Please, don't be angry at me. I'm sorry."

I pressed my lips together, so they wouldn't curl into a smile.

"Alpha, is that okay?" Ellen asked.

"It's fine, Ellen," I said, then hung up.

It wasn't particularly fine, but I wasn't going to keep her from her mate. That'd be selfish, and I was only a selfish son-of-a-bitch to Jade. Part of me hoped that Ellen couldn't come anyway. It gave me an excuse to see Jade, even though I knew I shouldn't be bringing Kylie to Jade's.

Once Kylie put on her pajamas, I nodded to the bathroom. "Go get your stuff for the night."

"Are we going to see Jade?"

"Go get your stuff."

"Yay!" Kylie ran into the other room. "I'm going to use her lipstick again."

After a couple moments, Kylie came back with her toothbrush in one hand, and Jade's lipstick that she had given her at the bakery in the other. I cursed to myself and grabbed a bag, stuffing a couple essentials for her into it.

Kylie was almost nine, but she sometimes still wet the bed. And since heading over to Jade's wasn't in her usual schedule, I expected her to have even more anxiety tonight compared to usual when she was with Ellen or me for the night.



Twenty minutes later, I banged on Jain's front door and hoped that Jade wasn't out. Kylie held the straps of her backpack, her pigtails bouncing on her head as she jumped up and down anxiously.

Jade opened the door and stared at me with wide eyes. "What are you—"

"Jade!" Kylie shouted, wrapping her small hands around Jade's elbows and jumping into her arms, grinning from ear to ear and giggling louder than I had ever heard her before. It actually brought a smile to my face to see how happy she was with Jade.

It almost made me feel bad about what I was going to do.

The Chaos was pulling us closer and closer by the day, and I needed it to stop. Now.

There was no way that I could mate Jade. No fucking way.

Jain appeared at the door behind Jade. "Alpha, what are you doing here?"

Jade grimaced at me, upper lip curling in disgust. "Yeah, what are you doing here?"

Instead of looking at Jade, I directed my attention at Jain, knowing that it would piss her off. "The Chaos has brought more rogues tonight. Can you watch Kylie for the night? I hate to put it on you, but Ellen found her mate so she can't watch her, and Kylie wouldn't stop screaming to see Jade."

Jain looked over at Jade, and smiled. "Yes, we can watch her."

Kylie twisted a finger around Jade's purple hair. "I brought your lipstick back! Can you do my makeup? I love your lipstick, Jade."

"Sure," Jade said, giving her a small smile. "We can do your makeup."

"Kylie, remember what we talked about," I said.

"Yeah, we talked about how Daddy was mean to you today, Jade," Kylie said.

Jade looked over at me for a brief moment. "He's always mean to me."

"About the makeup, Kylie," I said, between clenched teeth.

Jade placed Kylie on the ground. “I’ll show you all my lipstick tonight, Kylie. Why don’t you go inside and get ready in my room?” she said, looking at me sideways with a smirk, because she knew I didn’t want Kylie using lipstick. She’d already become obsessed with it.

“Can we talk for a moment?” I asked Jade, stuffing my hands into my pockets when Kylie disappeared into the house. Nerves zipped through me, and I repeated to myself what I was about to do... what I was about to say to Jade... was for the best.

I had hurt her so much in the past. Part of me thought that she deserved more than me, the other part feared that if I went through with mating her, she would hurt me.

After Jain gave me a small smile, she followed Kylie into the hallway. “This way to Jade’s room, dear,” she said, a door closing behind her.

“This morning was a mistake,” I said. Adrenaline rushed through my body, my heart racing. Yowls and desperate cries for help drifting through the thick fog behind me. I crossed my arms. “I don’t want another mate.”

Lie.

I had searched for one for the past nine years. I just didn’t want it to be her.

Jade pressed her lips together like this didn’t affect her, but I could see that it did in her big glossy eyes. She mirrored me, crossing her arms over her chest and glaring up at me, nostrils flaring and canines lengthening.

“I’ve been alone for long enough,” I snapped, feeling the anger of Jade’s father’s betrayal bubbling up within me. He was once one of my good friends, and he slept with my mate, my fucking mate. “I don’t need someone like you.”

Jade looked away, and growled, “I don’t want you as a mate either.”

And, for some goddess-awful reason, hearing those words destroyed me on the inside.

Truth was that I didn’t want to reject her, but I also didn’t want her to

betray me either. I'd rather be lonely than feel that hurt again. It was a selfish fucking thought to deny Jade as my mate because of her father's mistakes, but...

Fuck, I was all over the place. I didn't know what I wanted anymore.

"Good," I said.

"Good."

"Then it's settled."

She glanced up at me with those big eyes again. "It's settled."

We stared at each other for a couple moments, each of us knowing what we needed to do to end this right here and right now. A few simple words that would break our bond for good, so we could have a chance at another mate, maybe even in this Chaos.

Moments passed. The howling became louder, the red moonlight shining brighter.

Even if we were both on the same page, neither one of us actually moved to say those few words that would solidify the break of bond, the rejection. I couldn't even think of the words, never mind let them come out of my mouth.

Instead, I cleared my throat and ran off into the woods to hunt for the night, leaving Jade waiting on her porch steps, her gaze burning into me from behind. When I was a good distance into the forest, I slipped behind a tree and listened to her front door slam closed.

Pain shot through my body.

After years of waiting for a second-chance mate, I had come so close to rejecting her. How could I even do something like that? How could I... how could I not want her after seeing how she was with Kylie? Was it selfish to not want to give Kylie something as amazing as I saw earlier?

No, I was saving us both a bit of heartache in the long run.

Jade would cheat on me too, just like my ex-mate had an affair with Jade's father.

It might hurt now, but this pain was nothing compared to what would

happen if I allowed myself to fall in love with a woman half my age who had a father like hers. I couldn't let it happen to me again... I couldn't.

But that didn't mean that I'd let anyone else have her.



After forty-five minutes of slaughtering feral rogues who couldn't stay sane in the Chaos, I stood at the edge of my property and relished in the forest soaked in rogues' sanguine blood. Then, about a half-mile away, through the red moonlight, a lone rogue walked toward us without any aggression behind his steps.

Everything seemed a little too calm, too quiet, that it kept me on edge.

With blood smeared over his black coat, Saif looked at me for commands. Usually, I would kill the rogue on sight, especially now that rogues thought they could overrun our property, but something stopped me. Rogues were never this calm, and the last one who approached me like this was looking for Jade.

He wanted something too, I just hoped to the Goddess it wasn't her.

When he stopped twenty feet from my border, I shifted into my human and demanded he stop and shift too. And to my surprise, he did and shook out his unkempt brown hair. This wolf wasn't the same one we had run into before.

"Why are you here?" I growled.

"I'm searching for someone."

"If it's a mate, rogues like you aren't welcome on my pack lands."

"I'm looking for one of your pack members, Jade."

My body tensed, adrenaline rushing back through my veins. Jade.

What the fuck did he want with Jade? Why did they all fucking want her?

"Why?" I asked.

"None of your busin—"

Before the rogue could finish his sentence, I leaped forward, grabbed him by the throat, and thrust him against a tree. “Everyone in my pack is my fucking business, pup. Now, why are you looking for her?”

The rogue snarled at me, canines lengthening. “Vex Agles plans to mate her.”

“Nobody gets to have her. She’s none of your fucking business. She’s mine.”

“Yours?” the rogue howled. “She’d never mate yo—”

I snapped his neck in two and dropped the dead man from my hands.

Nobody else touched Jade. Nobody else needed Jade. Nobody else claimed Jade.

Jade belonged to me.

## JADE



*R*ed moonlight flooded into the room through the parted curtains. I wiped my tired eyes and reached over my bed to grab my phone from the bedside table, but it wasn't there. After grumbling obscenities to myself, I reached around, hoping to find it without getting out of bed.

Thanks to the Chaos, I didn't know what time it was.

But it had to be before 6:00 a.m. because Jain's light wasn't on in the hallway and—

*Wait a minute.*

I shot up in the king-sized bed, pressing my back against the carved headboard and pulling the silky sheets up my clothed body. Maddox stood in the corner of his room, with his arms crossed over his chest and his golden gaze intently on me.

“What the hell am I doing here?” I asked him.

Yet I made no move to leave his bed. I really should've but his butterscotch scent smelled too fucking good, calmed me more than anything else ever had, and trapped me here, making me feel something for him that I vowed to never feel for anyone else.

Instead of answering me like a normal person, Maddox kicked himself off the wall and slowly strode over to me, the red moonlight flickering through his eyes and illuminating his large, bulky figure. He stood at the edge of the

bed, the window behind him making him look like a menacing shadow of a man.

“Who’s the rogue?” he asked, voice hard.

Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I said, desperately keeping calm even though my heart was racing. Maddox either met Roger, Harold, or Vex on his hunt last night, and if he met Vex... Goddess, I didn’t know what I’d do.

“The fucking rogue, Jade,” Maddox growled through clenched teeth. “Who is he to you?”

“He’s nobody,” I said truthfully.

Maddox wouldn’t believe me, but that was his problem.

After snatching my chin in his large, calloused hand, Maddox pulled me close enough to him that I could just taste his lips on my own, the saliva dripping down his sharp canines, the way his tongue would feel in my mouth, battling with my own.

“Don’t fuck with me, Jade. I’m not in the mood. Who the fuck is he?”

Realizing that I was falling for him, I shoved him back. “What do you care? Last time you talked to me, you said that you didn’t want a mate. I can do whatever or whoever the fuck I want without your permiss—”

Before I could finish my sentence, Maddox lifted me off the bed with his hand around my throat and shoved me against the wall, his body pressed against mine and his warm breath on my neck. “I’m not going to ask you again. Tell me who he is, and that’s an alpha order.”

I swallowed hard, my lips parting almost instinctively. Though I didn’t want to tell him anything, I found myself whimpering under his touch, wanting so desperately to have my mate accept me, and feeling ashamed for what he had made me.

“He’s just someone that I...”

Pain shot through me, all the memories of what I had done with the

rogues after Dad left and Mom killed herself lingering in my mind. Besides Jain, I had nobody in this pack. As annoying as they were, those rogues were... like my family for the last few years.

I couldn't tell Maddox the truth. I couldn't tell him that I hung out with rogues. As much as I hated that man, I didn't want him to know the truth about me: that I had gotten so desperate that I needed extra money and wanted someone—a fucking dysfunctional family—to help me, because this pack gave me nothing.

No. I wanted him to see me as strong. I didn't want him to know that him torturing Dad and making my life a living hell these past nine years affected me. He'd win that way, and I hated him with my entire being.

That's what I had been telling myself.

So, I pushed my shoulders back and glared at him. "He's just someone I hook up with."

Maddox growled, "No." He shook his head, his hand tightening around my throat. "No. You're mine."

At the sound of his words, I sucked in a breath and stared at him with wide eyes. He was acting possessive and jealous, just like any mate would, but it was just the Chaos. When the Chaos passed, he wouldn't feel the same way, he wouldn't act the same way, he'd look at me with disgust like he usually did.

But, Goddess, if I didn't think it was sexy...

My gaze traveled down his taut body, the blood smeared across his chest and all over his hands. "What did you do to him?" I asked, inhaling Roger's blood and sucking in a sharp breath, the heat between my thighs rising. "What did you do to Roger?"

"I killed him."

"What?" I whispered.

"Nobody else touches my mate," Maddox growled. "You're all mine."

He kissed down my neck. "Mine."

He ran his hands up and down my body. "Mine."

He growled into my ear, "Mine."

The more he repeated the word, the rougher and more savage he became, his instincts seizing control of him. And for some ungodly reason, I couldn't help but enjoy his words and how he touched me. When he shoved me toward the bed, I laid back on it and spread my legs for him to grind his body against mine.

It's like something took hold of me, something bad.

Roughly, he snatched my chin in his calloused hand and held it tightly, his fingers strumming against the column of my throat. "You belong to me, and nobody else, Jade." He shoved himself between my legs and rubbed his hard cock against my core. "And I'm going to show you why."

My breath caught in my throat, the memories of the other night flooding through my mind. Alpha Maddox was going to show me exactly why I belonged to nobody else, why I was his, and how he would keep me.

He pulled my face closer to his, his butterscotch scent drifting through my nostrils, and placed his open mouth on mine, thrusting his tongue into my mouth and sucking on my lower lip harshly. Within a moment, he sprawled his hand across my chest and ripped my shirt at its seams, large claw marks cutting right into the fabric and shredding it to pieces.

I pulled my knees together as much as I could around him, the heat gathering between my thighs. Every second that passed, he pressed himself harder into me, thrusting against my covered pussy like he would if he were inside of me.

"Maddox," I said in a breathy whisper.

He hooked one arm around my waist and threw me further onto his king-sized bed, so my head rested near the pillows this time. I landed with a thud, sinking into the memory-foam, and growing wetter as he crawled onto the bed toward me, his canines glistening under the red moonlight.

Starting at my neck, Maddox left blotchy red hickeys all the way down

my body until he reached my tits. His mouth moved hungrily across them, sucking on the soft flesh and dragging his canines all over them until they were red.

Finally, he moved lower, pulled off my pants, and dipped his head between my legs again, eating my pussy like he owned it. And... he did. Maddox was the only person that I had ever been with. Between this pack hating me and me hating the rogues I hung out with, I didn't really find anyone to love me or want to be with me, especially like this.

“You're mine, Jade. Only mine.”

His words made me feel so good.

For the first time in a long damn time.

With my clit between his lips, Maddox tugged up on it gently, then let it go, and situated himself between my legs. He kicked off his ripped jeans and took out his thick cock, rubbing the head against my wetness and shoving it into me, hard.

When he pulled out of me, I waited for him to thrust himself back into my pussy, but he didn't. Instead, he rubbed his head against my wetness more and stared down at me. “Tell me that you're mine. I want to hear you fucking say it.”

Capturing my nipple between two fingers, Maddox tugged on it. A wave of pleasure shot through my body. He did it again, this time pushing his dick harder against my wetness. I squirmed under him, desperate to push him inside of me but failing.

I didn't know if I could trust Maddox, so I didn't want to say the words out loud. Once I did, I wouldn't be able to take them back. I feared that I would be his, and he'd take advantage of that. Or worse, I'd be his to torture for eternity.

When I didn't answer, he released my nipple and pulled his cock further away from my pussy, so that he was close but wasn't touching me at all. I curled my toes and stared up at him with pleading eyes, desperate to be filled

by my mate.

He brushed his lips over mine so lightly I almost couldn't feel it. Then, without touching me, he moved them down my body to my pussy, let a wad of spit drip off his lips and fall onto my clit, and glanced up at me. "I don't care how long it takes. You will tell me that you're mine."

"No," I said through clenched teeth.

He pushed two of his fingers inside of me, getting them wet with my juices. "No?"

"No."

A menacing growl escaped his lips and he shoved two fingers inside my tight hole, and finger-fucked me until I screamed out his name. When my legs trembled, he pulled his hand from between my thighs and stuffed his fingers into my mouth. "Taste what's mine, Jade. Tell me how good your cunt is on your tongue."

I drew my brows together and suppressed a whimper.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

He pulled his fingers out of my mouth, sucked my bottom lip between his teeth, and growled. "Fucking say it, Jade, and I'll give this all to you." He gripped his cock and rubbed the head against my wetness.

Unable to hold back, I moaned. "I'm yours. I'm yours. I'm yours, Maddox. Take m—"

Before I could finish my sentence, he plunged himself inside of me and filled me completely. He grasped my waist, thumbs pressing into my abdomen, and drew me closer to him with every thrust, his balls smacking against my pussy and his hips hitting against my clit.

Goddess, I needed my cunt filled to the brim with his thick cum.

I wanted him to show me that I was his, that my pussy belonged to no one else.

I clenched around him as he pumped in and out of me relentlessly, his hand curled around my neck. He pulled me toward him with each thrust,

getting deep in my cunt and making me cry out in a passionate despair.

This man had been the one who had made my life hell.

Now, he was the one who would claim me as his.

He pushed two of his fingers into my mouth and ordered that I suck on them. Being the love-deprived, hopeless woman that I was, I sucked them into my mouth, getting them wet with my spit. When he pulled them out of me, he brushed them against my clit and harshly rubbed me off. A wave of pleasure rushed through me, and I clenched harder on him.

“Does my mate like that?” he asked in my ear. I pressed my lips together, trying not to make a sound. “Huh?” He slapped my pussy hard, another wave of pleasure pulsing through me. “Answer me.”

I whimpered, the feel of his huge cock making me clench.

A harsher slap against my clit.

I whimpered again and nodded my head. “Yes,” I breathed. “Yes, I love it.”

“I’m going to fill your tight little pussy up with all my cum,” he said against my ear. “Make you carry my pups one day.” He rested his forehead against the crook of my neck and inhaled deeply. “Fuck, you’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

Unable to stop, I moaned and nodded.

“Tell me you want it.”

“I want it, Maddox...” I closed my eyes, pussy pulsing. “Please.”

Suddenly, he grazed his teeth against my neck.

He was going to bite me, claim me, mark me as his property.

And, Goddess help me, I wanted him to do it so badly that I begged.

“Please,” I pleaded, my breathing ragged. I arched my back and tilted my head to the side, so Maddox had better access to my neck. “Please, bite me. I need it. I want to feel you. I want to feel loved for the first time in my pathetic life.”

But when the words came out of my mouth, he paused, then pulled away

from me completely, grabbed his shorts, and walked right out of his own bedroom, leaving me a sad, pitiful mess and believing that I was nothing to him.

And I would never be good enough.

Our mate bond meant nothing to him.

## MADDOX



*F*uck.

I slammed my bedroom door and sprinted down the hallway, threw the front door open and transformed into my wolf, needing to put as much space as possible between me and Jade. I wanted to mark her so badly, I wanted to stick my teeth in her and claim her as my own.

But...

But I couldn't.

Racing through the dark, sanguine moonlit forest, I pushed myself harder and faster. What the fuck was happening to me? I wanted to reject Jade earlier, then I killed someone because of her, then I dragged her back to my packhouse while she was sleeping just to mark her.

The Chaos drove me mad.

Jade was the one person I was supposed to hate, the one person I had vowed to torture for her father's mistakes. After Clea left me, I wanted to hurt someone because I hurt, but during the moment I was about to mark her, all I could think about was...

Being happy again.

And the last time I was happy, the last time I smiled at a woman and meant it, the last time I trusted a woman with my heart, Clea ripped it out, clawed it piece by piece, and told me that I and Kylie meant nothing to her.

A rogue darted through the forest by himself, and I couldn't help but follow him. I pushed myself hard until my lungs burned, until my legs ached, until I had caught the rogue with my teeth a mile off my property.

I sank my teeth into his neck and ripped out his throat, tearing the man to shreds to displace all the hurt and sorrow I had inside of me. I hated feeling like shit, and sometimes I wanted to just disappear for a bit, see if anyone would really care.

Would Jade care if I left her forever?

Would she find another mate?

Would she look for me?

After dropping some guts from my mouth, I transformed back into my human and collapsed onto the ground, the energy sapped from my body. What the fuck was I doing? What was wrong with me?

Vivid memories shot through my mind, and all I had the energy to do was close my eyes and succumb to them like I did every fucking night. Everything that had happened, everything that I had done... tormented me.



*Jade stood at the edge of our property in wolf form, canines lengthened, chest heaving up and down, and piercing wolf eyes focused on me. It was a month before her nineteenth birthday, and it was the first fucking time she had outrun me during one of our many pack training sessions.*

*I pushed my legs harder and faster, kicking up dirt and pine needles in my wake, my teeth aching to rip out those eyes of hers, so she couldn't glare at me with them anymore. I hated the way she looked just like her father.*

*But I especially loathed how she beat me.*

*She fucking beat me to the edge of our property, had run faster than any other wolf I had seen before, and still, she looked like she could run faster and harder, for miles upon miles more, even with her chest heaving up and*

down.

When I reached her, I growled, “Don’t wear yourself out in the beginning, pup.”

“You’re the one who couldn’t keep up,” she barked back.

Even in wolf form we could understand each other, the barks and growls coming out as clean as english did to the wolf-ear. I turned on my heel to face her, stepping closer and lowering into a fighting stance, wanting to do nothing more than to pounce on her. And while everyone else in my pack would’ve quickly bowed their heads and apologized for talking back to me, she replicated my stance.

“I’m not afraid of you,” she said.

Something inside of me snapped, and not in the angry kind of way.

In the way it only had with Clea.

No matter how much I wanted Jade to submit, she wouldn’t. Not willingly, and maybe not even forcefully. Jade King was strong, fast, and unyielding. And I liked it so much more than I should’ve.

Still, it wasn’t the first time I had felt this toward her.

“Are we done with this stupid training?” Jade barked, lowering her head and narrowing her wolfish eyes at me. She drew her tongue across her sharp canines. “I don’t want to spend another minute here with you.”

I growled again. Everything about her repulsed me, especially how confident she acted. She was nothing more than a mere pup with the unruly strength of a luna, who obviously wanted to be punished. She knew that no good omega talked back to their alpha.

Jade King didn’t deserve her power, and I loathed this feeling in the middle of my chest when I saw her. I’d do anything that I needed to stop it, even if that meant leaping at her, taking her fur between my teeth, and shoving her to the ground where she belonged.

So, I did just that and stood over her.

My heart pounded against my ribcage. My saliva dripped onto her snout.

*My canines ached to sink into her neck and rip out her throat. At least, that's what I told myself that this feeling was... hatred. But it was more than that, more than I would ever admit.*

*"If you want an enemy pack to take your life during a war, then leave, pup," I growled.*

*I didn't want her to leave. I wanted to terrify her, so she would stay.*

*"If a warrior wolf saw you on the battlefield, they'd snap you in fucking half." I posted my paws on each side of her head and moved my snout closer to her, barking out again. "And nobody in this pack would care. So you either stay and train, or you leave and die."*

*Jade yowled and thrust her hind legs into mine, shoving me off her and onto the dirt beside her. "I rather die than be in this pack with you," she said, then sprinted through the forest toward her home.*

*I followed after her, staying in the shadows because rogues had been more rampant than ever lately around my property lately. And I refused to let one kill her. Jade King was mine to hurt, now more than ever.*

## JADE



“*W*hat are you getting, Miss Kylie?” I asked, forearms on the counter at the bakery.

Kylie stood with Ellen, staring at all the goodies inside the glass containers as if she was going to order something other than two scoops of chocolate ice cream. Ellen glanced down at her phone, eyes lighting up the way Mom’s did when she looked at Dad.

At least, before he cheated.

“I’ll be right back, Kylie,” Ellen said, hurrying to the darkened windows and holding the phone to her ear, a huge grin pinned on her face.

I grimaced at her and balled my hands into fists. Sure, I was happy she found her mate but, fuck, I wished I could smile like that while thinking about Maddox. All I could fucking do whenever his ugly face popped into my head was seethe.

“Two scoops of chocolate ice cream,” Kylie finally decided.

The bell on the front door jingled, and two kids who couldn’t even be ten yet walked into the bakery by themselves. I grabbed a white bowl from the dish rack and the ice cream scoop from the sink. Who the hell let two kids out during the Chaos?

After scooping the ice cream up, I placed the bowl on the counter and glanced over at the boys standing feet from Kylie, staring at her with wide

eyes, and whispering behind their hands. I growled. I knew that fucking look; I had seen it too many times.

“Get out of here,” I said between gritted teeth. “I’m not serving you if you’re going to be bullies.”

“But we didn’t do anything!” one of the kids said.

I crossed my arms over my chest and walked around the counter, pulling Kylie behind me. “You weren’t talking shit about Kylie to each other? Hmm?”

“We can do what we want,” the other said. “My mom says that you’re worthless anyway.”

Snapping, I snatched them both by the back of the throat and dragged them to the doors, throwing them outside. They could make fun of me behind my back as much as they fucking wanted, but I wouldn’t serve anyone who talked shit about Kylie.

She didn’t deserve a life so cruel.

If Maddox found out, he’d beat their parents’ asses.

After ushering Kylie to a table, I sat across from her. “What did I tell you about bullies like that?”

With a big bowl of chocolate ice cream in front of her, Kylie furrowed her brows in an angry stare and took a heaping spoonful in her hand. I broke a bear claw in half and wiped the excess flakes onto the checkered floor. I’d deal with it later.

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t remember what I told you a couple weeks ago?” I asked, arching a brow.

She frowned even harder, chocolate smeared across her lips and cheeks. “No.”

“Don’t let them get to you,” I said, wishing that I could take my own advice with Maddox. But that ship had sailed nine years ago when he started bullying me, and it sure as hell wouldn’t stop anytime soon. I was hell bent

on making his life a living hell too.

Fuck him.

“Yeah, but they’re mean to me.”

“Be mean back,” I said before I could stop myself.

Kylie took another bite. “But Daddy says to be nice.”

I stifled an empty laugh. What a damn hypocrite. He told his daughter one thing and did the exact fucking opposite.

After letting out a sigh and deciding *not* to corrupt Kylie this time around, I stuffed the sweet baked good into my mouth and chewed angrily. “He’s right. You shouldn’t be mean to people, but that doesn’t mean you have to take their bad words. Next time, tell them to stop it. Stand up for yourself.”

“But...” Kylie placed her spoon down and wiped her mouth with the back of her hand.

“No buts, missy. Next time, you tell them to stop.”

“Okay.” The corner of her lips twitched up, then she glanced over at Ellen who had put the phone down and was chatting with Jain now. “Can you pleeeeeease come over and do my lipstick again? Ellen doesn’t have the kind that you have, Jade. Pleeeeeease.”

“Is your dad home?” I asked warily.

Half of me hoped he wasn’t, yet the other half... Goddess, the other half of me hoped he was there. After the other night, I hadn’t seen him and had been craving, fucking craving, his scent again.

I hated that son of a bitch, but, damn, did he smell like sex.

Kylie shrugged. “Maybe.”

Ellen walked over and placed her hands on Kylie’s shoulders. “He told me that he’ll be in for a couple hours. He should be home if you want to talk to him.”

“Oh, no,” I assured. I didn’t want anyone to get any ideas. “I *don’t* want to talk to him.”

“Pleeeeeease,” Kylie said, tugging on my arm. “Please, Jade.”

Did I want to see Maddox again? No. But I did want to smell him.  
Just for a couple moments. To calm down my wolf. That was all.

I'd bring Kylie home where she was safe and sound, away from the Chaos, maybe put her to bed, and then my ass would be right out of that house and away from that asshole. That's what I promised myself all would happen tonight.

But promises meant nothing during the Chaos. Absolutely nothing.

## MADDOX



*“We’re over, Maddox.” Clea curled her lip up in an ugly scowl and walked toward the front door. “I can’t live with what you’ve done to your strongest warrior and my best friend.”*

*Rage rushed through me. “I didn’t sleep with Martin. You did. You ruined this.”*

*Clea stared at me with watery eyes. “She’s dead because you tortured her mate. She feels his pain, and my best friend will never come back because of what you’ve done. You will never be able to replace her, nor Martin.”*

*I stood there, the anger subsiding quickly and being replaced with agony. It had barely been a week, and I... I... still hadn’t really accepted that Clea cheated on me with my best friend and warrior. How could she do something like that to her family?*

*Even more, how could she blame me for it?*

*Was it really my fault that Hannah killed herself?*

*“Don’t go,” I whispered.*

*Weak, that’s what I was for her.*

*Kylie cried in the crib, and I wanted to go calm her down. But... but my mate was about to leave me. I reached out for Clea, desperate for her to come back, desperate for her not to leave. We had a daughter together, and I didn’t want to raise her alone. She deserved to have a mom.*

*“Think about Kylie,” I pleaded.*

*Clea pulled herself out of my hold, and growled, “She will be nothing but a pain to raise. I’m not in the mindset to bring her up, Maddox. Don’t put it on me. You’re the one who got me pregnant.”*

*“You’re the one who begged me to,” I said, her words cutting into me like daggers.*

*“I can’t do this anymore,” Clea said, shaking her head and grasping the door handle. She turned around to face me without a bit of remorse on her face. “I reject Maddox Spear as my mate.”*

*Unable to hold myself up, I collapsed to my knees. “Clea, please.”*

*Piercing pain shot through my chest, my fingers trembling harder than they did when I found Hannah King hanging in her living room. Tears welled up in my eyes, and I couldn’t stop them from running down my cheeks.*

*“Please, don’t leave me,” I whispered, my throat drying. “I love you. I’ve given you everything that I have. We have Kylie. Please.”*

*Clea growled, “You’ve become a weak man, Maddox. I could never love you like I used to. Goodbye.” She walked out the door and slammed it in my face.*

*A moment later, the door re-opened. My heart stammered at the mere thought of seeing Clea again. Except, my ex-mate didn’t walk into the room. This time, the purple-haired, lipstick-wearing, quick-lipped, twenty-something-year-old Jade King did.*

*My chest tightened when I saw her, standing there in all her glory.*

*A new mate.*

*My second chance.*

*Goddess, I had prayed for it for nine years.*

*“We’re over, Maddox.” Jade curled her lip up in an ugly scowl and grabbed the door handle. “I can’t live with what you’ve done to me. You tortured my father, made my mother kill herself, and bullied me. You’re a worthless alpha.”*

*Pain shot through me. "I'm sorry, Jade... I'm so sorry."*

*Jade stared at me with watery eyes. "My mom is dead because of you. I feel the pain of loss every day, and my mom will never come back because of what you've done. You will never be able to replace her, nor my father."*

*I stood there, the agony intensifying. It had barely been nine years, and I... I... still hadn't realized I had caused Jade so much pain. How could I do something like that to a child, a fucking child?*

*Even more, how could I blame her for her father's mistakes?*

*It was my fault that her mother killed herself.*

*"Please, don't go," I whispered.*

*I wanted to be strong for her, but I was a weak man.*

*Kylie sobbed in the other room for Jade, and Jade looked as if she wanted to go calm her down. But she turned to me instead with so much pain on her face. I reached out for Jade, desperate for her to stay. She had been the only person who could deal with my shit, the only person who could challenge me, the only person who my daughter looked up to.*

*"You deserve more than me," I whispered, finally coming to terms with it.*

*Jade growled, "I do."*

*Her words cut into me like swords, straight through my body, a clean cut.*

*"I can't do this anymore," Jade said, shaking her head and turning the door handle. She faced me without a bit of remorse on her face. "I reject Maddox Spear as my mate."*

*Unable to hold myself up, I collapsed to my knees. "Jade, please."*

*Piercing pain shot through my chest, my fingers trembling harder than they did when Clea rejected me. Tears welled up in my eyes, and I couldn't stop them from running down my cheeks, nor the sob that clawed its way out of my throat.*

*"Please, don't leave me," I whispered, my throat drying. "I love you. I'll change."*

*Jade growled again, "You won't change. You've always been a weak*

*man, Maddox. I could never love you because you don't love me. If you did, you wouldn't have bullied me. Goodbye."* She walked out the door and slammed it in my face.

*I rested my forehead on the ground, and cried out, "Don't go, Jade. Don't go."*



Someone placed their hands on my shoulders from above and shook me harshly. I snapped awake and sat up in my bed. With her legs on either side of my torso, Jade slid off me and fell back on the mattress, her brows furrowed.

"Jade," I whispered, pain still running through my veins. "What are you doing here?"

Jade scrambled to put distance between us and knelt at the edge of the bed. "I brought Kylie home. She's sleeping, and I... I heard you in here. Your body was thrashing around on the bed. I thought something was wrong."

I scooted up to the headboard, letting the blankets fall down my bare abdomen. Jade glanced at it, then back up at me, sucking in a sharp breath. She jumped to her feet and inched toward the door. "Maybe I should just go instead..."

"No," I ordered.

Usually Jade would refuse to listen to my commands, but this time she stopped.

"I..." I glanced down at the blankets. "Don't go, please. Not now."

Jade interlocked her hands in front of her and gnawed on the inside of her cheek, her painted lips puckering slightly. "I... Jain needs me back at the bakery though."

Expecting her to leave me like Clea did, I leaned over the side of the bed

and stared at the ground with tears in my eyes. Clea was right. I had become a weak man; I hurt those who I thought deserved it; I had become a monster.

I was no different from those rogues outside.

“Go,” I said. “Jain’s waiting.”

Instead of disappearing through that door, Jade walked toward me and sat by my side, her thigh against mine and her fingers fidgeting against her legs. Then she wrapped her arms around my torso and hugged me tight. “This doesn’t change the fact that I hate you.”

After a couple moments, when I was sure she wouldn’t pull away, I placed my hand over her forearm and let a sob escape my lips, my chest so tight I couldn’t breathe. Clea had fucked me up so badly that I wanted to hurt everyone around me, including my mate.

No matter how strong she was and no matter how good she was to Kylie, I didn’t think I could ever be good enough for Jade. But Jade was here with me right now, after I refused to mark her and after I put her through so much shit.

If she didn’t want to be here, I knew she would’ve walked out that door.

“Can I ask you a question?” Jade said once I had bit back my sobs. When I didn’t respond, Jade pulled her arms away from me and stared down at her lap. “Why didn’t you mark me?”

My stomach tightened, and I balled my hands into fists. Why hadn’t I marked her? If I told her the real reason, would she think I was weak like Clea had too? Would she reject me right here, right now?

I refused to tell her the real reason why I didn’t mark her. I refused to admit that I feared she’d break me. I had shattered her so many times because I hated the feeling of being in pieces. I wanted someone else to hurt too, but I couldn’t anymore.

“I need time, Jade,” I whispered.

She tensed. “That doesn’t answer my question.”

“Please...”

“The Chaos is almost over,” Jade said, standing up. “If you don’t mark me by the end of it, then you’ll have all the time in the fucking world. We’ll both be mateless for another year or longer, until the next Chaos. Make up your mind soon, or I’ll do it for us.”

## MADDOX



The next day I stepped into Berkley's Bar, a popular pub inches off my property. I found a lone table and scooted onto one of the brown leather cushioned stools. With my head in my hands and a want to be alone right now, I inhaled the scent of alcohol and wished all I was smelling was her. Jade.

A couple of my warriors walked in and took seats around me, including Saif. While they started talking, I couldn't pay attention to anything or anyone anymore. My mind reeled with thoughts of Jade laying in my bed, begging me to mark her. And I just... I just walked out.

How could I fucking do that to her?

How could I—

Charlie and Clarissa sauntered into the bar, swaying their hips from side to side and walked up to our table, each taking a seat next to me. A week ago, I would've gladly flirted with them, but now... fuck, I wanted them gone.

"Alpha," Charlie purred. "When are we coming over?"

Clarissa scooted closer. "We know how you love to cook. What're you planning for us?"

Goddess, I wanted to tell them I wasn't cooking anything for them, that they weren't coming over. Never in a million fucking years. But I couldn't think straight enough to form a coherent fucking sentence. So, I grabbed a

glass of whatever alcohol was in front of me and took a long gulp.

Fuck.

Even if I went home now to get away from them, my sheets would be doused in Jade's scent. Between Kylie and the Chaos, I couldn't seem to stay away or get away from her, and I didn't want to. Hell, I even wanted to go find her, explain my dream to her, tell her that I needed time to process this all.

But neither of us had time.

If we didn't mate during this Chaos, we couldn't officially mate until the next Chaos. She'd go all year without my claim on her, and someone might take fucking advantage of that. It wasn't going to fucking happen. No other man would claim her as his. Not in my fucking lifetime.

A moment later, Jade stormed into the bar, took one look at me, and groaned out loud. She scowled, snatched a drink from the wrap-around wooden bar, and found a corner of the room by herself. People from my pack moved away from her like she was a disgusted animal.

I had caused that immediate repulse, and now I was fucking glad.

This way... nobody even thought about coming on to my mate. Nobody would smell her scent, except me. Nobody would look at her, except me. Nobody would have her, except me. She was mine, yet I couldn't find the courage to go over there.

I was a broken alpha who hurt everything he loved.

Saif nudged me across the table. "I picked up Clea's scent today. Maybe she's coming back to heal us all."

Clea? She was back? What, to torment me more?

No fucking way I'd allow it.

My gaze fell on Jade almost instinctively, those memories of Clea making me sick. It was so hard to trust again, so difficult to show Jade I wanted to be with her but was also trying to protect myself and Kylie too.

A rogue sauntered into the bar, and Jade lifted her head for a brief

moment. My table suddenly quieted down, glancing from me to him, wondering if we should do something about him. But for the third fucking time this past week, this was the only rogue I had come across that hadn't been feral on this pack, like the rest of the wild animals were outside.

And they all had been looking for Jade.

I wanted to see what he was about to do.

Like expected, the rogue scanned the bar, spotted Jade sitting in the corner with a hand over her face as if she couldn't deal with this shit anymore, and strolled all the way to her, grabbing a beer from the bar on his way over.

Sitting back, I grabbed my cup and tightened it in my hand, almost to the point where it broke. I glared at the rogue as he sat at the table beside her, his back against the leather booth and his gaze on the smooth wooden table in front of him.

Jade looked up and over at him, scowling.

After a couple moments of silence, she turned back to her drink, her lips moving to form—what seemed like—the words, “What're you doing here?”

“Did you find a mate?” he asked, voice loud enough for me to hear, which pissed Jade off even more.

She tightened her fist around her cup and growled, sneaking a glance at me. Even from all the way across the bar, I could feel her pain shoot through my body. It enveloped every inch of me and made me hurt so fucking bad.

My mate was breaking. I broke her.

And this time, I didn't enjoy it.

“No,” she said, loud enough for me to hear. “I didn't find my mate.”

She lied.

My mate fucking lied about me.

“Has Vex found his mate?” she asked.

My hand tightened into a fist. Vex must've been the guy looking for her the other day, the one I didn't think I needed to kill for her. But I should've

snapped his fucking neck when I had the chance, I should've given into my wolfish instincts and slaughtered him, bathed in his blood, and gave Jade his canine.

The rogue shook his head. "He's been looking for you."

After Jade drank down the rest of her drink, she squeezed her eyes closed, rubbed her hand over her face as if she were contemplating something, then she looked back up, right at me, and clenched her jaw. After a quieter exchange, the rogue nodded and stood, about to walk away from her, when she suddenly added, "Harold, tell Vex to come find me."

The glass shattered in my hand, cutting into my flesh. Charlie yelped in surprise, gathering some napkins to clean up the alcohol and pulling some glass out of my hand, but I couldn't even fucking think straight anymore.

Fuck no.

My mate wasn't going to mate Vex.

I wouldn't fucking allow it.

Leaving her glass on her table, Jade stood up and walked toward the back. I excused myself from the table and followed her. Jade wasn't just a pastime who I could torment. Jade was my mate, and I was going to mark her.

## JADE



This was the last fucking straw.

I stormed into the bathroom and splashed water on my face.

After refusing to reject me mere hours ago, Maddox turned up at the bar with the two most annoying pieces of shit that I had ever known. How could he even live with himself? Who the fuck did he think he was? Some sort of fucking god?

Hell to the fuck no.

He drove me mad.

First, he wanted to reject me. Then, I woke up in his bed and he was seconds from marking me. Did he make any sense whatsoever? Absolutely not. And I couldn't take this any longer. It was too much back and forth, gave me too much anxiety, and showed me that he didn't really love me. He'd be just like Dad.

If we didn't mate by the end of this week, then we wouldn't be able to complete the bond until next Chaos, and who knew when that'd be. And I wasn't about to go through this kind of pain for the next year or however long it was going to take to return again. It could be as long as nine years like last time, maybe longer.

Staring in the rusty bathroom mirror in the pub, I repeated those three words that could break our bond and set me straight again. I refused to be his

whore who he came to when he wanted his dick to feel good. I was stronger than that.

But to say I was happy that he didn't mark me the other day would be a lie. After he ran out, I locked myself in his room and cried into his pillow, knowing my body felt so weak that I wouldn't be able to make it home without crying, nevermind face Jain and pretend like everything was fine.

So, I mouthed the words:

*I reject you.*

*I reject you.*

*I reject you.*

I wanted to say them out loud too, to prepare, but I couldn't get the words past my lips. Every time I started, my throat would close up and my chest would tighten, and I'd have to splash my face with some cold water.

Tears welled up in my eyes. I hated the Moon Goddess. I hated Maddox. I hated myself.

Frustrated, I slammed my fist into the mirror and broke it to pieces. I looked so weak. So fucking weak that I couldn't even say three fucking words. I hated how I felt so helpless when I was with or thinking about Maddox.

I never even wanted a mate.

Ever.

Suddenly the bathroom door was ripped open, and Maddox stepped into the room, with his canines lengthened and his eyes golden like the sun. My eyes widened, and when I went to shove him away, he pulled me toward him and crashed his lips down onto mine.

I kissed him back.

I knew that I shouldn't have.

But I did.

And when I finally realized what I did, I pushed him away fully with my hands on his taut chest. I parted my lips. "I... I... I..." Why wouldn't the

fucking words come out? It should've been so easy. I have practiced in my head over and over and over again. Instead of looking stupid and stuttering, I flared my nostrils. "Why're you out with those pieces of shit?"

Maddox furrowed his brows. "My pack?"

"If you want to fuck Charlie and Clarissa, just fucking reject me, Maddox. I can't do this anymore. I can't live like this." I begged him with tears flowing down my eyes. "Reject me, and go be with them, please."

"I don't want them, Jade. I have to entertain them because of Kylie."

"Kylie doesn't even like them!"

"They donated twice as much as anyone has ever put in that donation box."

"I DID THAT!" I shouted, finally. "I donated to the box, not her! That was me!"

A deafening silence settled in the bathroom, and Maddox's facial features softened. Before he could say anything, I shoved him back again, and growled, "Reject me, Maddox. Do it now. Now. I want to stop feeling like shit. I want to leave this pack and never see you again."

"No," Maddox said, voice softer than it had ever been with me. "I won't reject you."

"Do it."

"No."

"Please."

Goddess, I sounded so desperate.

"No."

After shoving him back as hard as I could one last time, I sprinted out of the bathroom and slipped out the back door to hunt for someone to kill. I shouldn't but I was getting restless not hunting with Vex this week. He was still out there looking for me somewhere, wanting me, ready to claim me, and I was actually thinking about letting him do it.

Pain shot through my body at the mere thought, but I was desperate to

forget about Maddox. He was so frustrating. Maybe seeing Vex wouldn't be that bad of an idea anymore. If Maddox couldn't reject me and couldn't love me, then I would find someone who would.

Harold waited outside for me, like I had asked him earlier in the pub, leaning against the brick building. As soon as I exited the bar, he nodded to the forest and toward the howls of victory coming from the Silver Vipers. He might've been a rogue and so much of an annoyance to me, but he didn't like the Silver Vipers either.

Before we could start on the path toward them, Maddox thrust the back door open and glared at the rogue, completely taken by the Chaos and the rage inside of me. He grabbed Harold by the throat and snapped his neck. Then, he snatched me. "No more running away from me. You're fucking mine, Jade. Mine."

## MADDOX



“Let me go!” Jade shouted as I dragged her through the fog to my packhouse. She kicked and punched and hit me, thrashing in my hold. “Let me go, now, Maddox! I hate you. I hate you so fucking much, and I mean it! I’m going to mate Vex and there’s nothing you can—”

Before she could finish her sentence, I grasped her chin and forced her against the nearest tree, glaring down at my mate and trying hard not to lose it as red moonlight glimmered on her bare neck.

“If anyone else tries to take you away from me, I’ll kill them too,” I hissed at her.

After my first mate cheated on me, I didn’t even kill Jade’s father for her. I tortured the fuck out of him, then I let him go because if my mate really loved me, she wouldn’t have cheated. But, fuck, I never killed anyone for a woman until I met Jade.

This was the second rogue I killed because of her.

The second life I took.

And I would take hundreds more if I needed.

Now, it was fucking serious. I couldn’t live without Jade, I couldn’t let her go and never see her again, and I really couldn’t reject her. I needed her so fucking badly, and I would do anything to have her.

I grasped her elbow and yanked her toward the house. Rage rushed

through me at the mere thought of her mating a rogue. That's where she had been going too, right to mate that fucking bastard.

"Are you fucking serious running with those rogues? They'll kill you, or fucking worse, try to take you away from me! They'll mark you without your consent and do far fucking more than any of those Silver Vipers."

"That's none of your fucking business," she snapped.

"Why're you hunting with those rogues?" I asked, not sure if I wanted to hear the answer.

"Because!" Jade shouted finally, ripping herself out of my grasp when we reached the packhouse. "After you kicked my father out of the pack, I had nothing! I needed the fucking money, and nobody would give me a job because of you." She poked a hard finger into my chest. "Because you made sure everyone hated me. I had to find another way to survive, and that was with rogues."

My chest tightened at the sight of her teary eyes. I went to move toward her, but she shoved me back. "You made my life a living hell every single day, and now you're my mate. How am I supposed to trust you? How am I supposed to believe that you won't do something like that again to me? You wouldn't even mark me!"

Jaw twitching, I glared at her.

She was just as hurt as I was.

After staring at me for another moment, she shook her head. "I can't trust you. We're both better off if you reject me, Maddox. So do it! Reject me. I don't care anymore. I'll take it like I have always taken your torment."

"Why don't you reject me?" I asked.

Because if this was how she really felt and this was what she really wanted, she'd be able to do it. I couldn't seem to even think of the few words that would break our bond. Jade was obsessed with them though.

Jade glared into my eyes, crossed her arms over her chest, and opened her mouth.

A moment passed, and my chest tightened. What if she actually did it? What if she actually wanted to reject me? I had never felt such intense connection to a woman before, and I didn't want to lose that.

“I...”

She furrowed her brows together, her features softening.

“I...”

Her lips trembled, tears threatening to spill.

“I can't,” she finally whispered, shoulders slumping forward as if she were trying to make herself small and invisible. But no matter how small she made herself, I'd always be able to feel her here with me.

“I won't betray you again,” I whispered. “I was just hurt.”

“And I was hurt too!” she cried, tears racing down her cheeks. “My dad cheated on my mom, got thrown out of our pack and our family. My mom couldn't even care for me anymore, I had to do that shit at eleven years old. And then I walked in on her with a rope around her fucking neck. I was barely twelve, Maddox. Barely older than Kylie! How's that for being hurt?”

Something took hold of me, and I realized I had been so caught up in myself that I didn't think about how I could truly be affecting anyone else. I was an alpha who had been a shitty person to his future mate. I would suffer the consequences of her not trusting me, not believing in me, not loving me for however long it took for her to gain her trust.

But, still, I was the alpha.

I could change this pack, and I could change myself.

Things could be different starting today.

Moving closer to her, I gently grasped her face. “I'm sorry. I can't change the past, but I can be a better mate for you, if you'd let me, Jade. I will give you the world like I give it to Kylie and make sure to never hurt you again.”

She paused for a couple moments, gaze wavering. “Maddox...”

“But if you want me to reject you, then I'll...” My chest tightened. “... then I'll...”

“No,” she said suddenly, claws digging into my hair. “I don’t want you to reject me. I want you to... to... to love me. Please, I’ve been alone for so long. I want someone to take care of me, to be with me, to love every piece of me. The good and the bad.” She paused and glanced up at me. “Will you love me?”

I grasped her face gently and kissed her on the lips. “I’ll do more than love you.”

“Maddox,” she whispered, shoving her hands into my chest but not hard enough to push me away. It was as if she didn’t know whether she could trust me yet or not, and I didn’t blame her. It would take years to make things better between us.

After capturing her hand in mine, I led her toward my bedroom and sat on the bed beside her, staring out the large window opposite my bed with her. She rested her head on my shoulder and sighed softly, the red moonlight glimmering against her face.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered, tucking a strand of her hair behind her ear. “For hurting you every day for the past nine years. After what happened with Clea, I... I felt so hurt. She cheated on me the day I found out that Kylie had autism. I felt so helpless, Jade...” My throat closed up. “I shouldn’t have hurt you because of what your father did.”

Tears streamed down her cheeks, and I wiped them away, one by one.

“I’m sorry that Clea walked out on you and Kylie,” Jade whispered. “She lost something... something amazing. I see the way Kylie looks up to you like you’re the best thing in this entire world.”

I bumped her shoulder against mine. “She looks up to you like that too.”

“No,” Jade corrected. “She just loves my lipstick.”

Shifting beside her, I wrapped my arms around her waist and laid my body on top of her. “Oh, you don’t give yourself enough credit, Jade. She has given me about twenty paintings of you and her that I have hidden inside my desk.”

“Hidden away?” Jade asked, some laughter in her voice.

“Hidden away because I don’t want anyone else to have you or see you,”  
I said, placing my lips against hers. “You’re mine.”

## JADE



“*M*ine,” Maddox murmured against my lips, tousled brown hair a mess on his head. He let out a low guttural growl, his muscles flexed against his dark gray crewneck and his canines emerging from under his lips. “You’re mine, Jade. I’m not going to make the mistake of letting you leave my bed without a mark again.”

I purred at the thought of him claiming me, desperate for him to touch me more. Pressing my hands against his chest to feel the taut and swollen muscle underneath his shirt, I curled my fingers into him.

Something in the back of my mind told me I shouldn’t trust him, but I pushed the thought away quickly because this was what I wanted. Despite vowing to never mate the person destined for me, I desperately wanted to mate Maddox. Now.

Maddox curled his arms around me and drew me even closer to him. “Mine.”

His scent of butterscotch drifted through my nose, and I relaxed against the memory foam mattress. He smelled so damn good. So good that I wanted him. *Right Fucking Now*. I couldn’t wait anymore for his mark or for my mate.

Tonight he would mark me, or tonight I’d leave.

And I really didn’t want to leave.

Maddox grabbed my wrist and pulled me closer to him, his nose in my hair, his fingers digging into my waist, and his mouth all over my neck, leaving hot kisses. I swallowed hard, pulled my thighs together, then gripped his shirt to pull him closer.

“Take me,” I pleaded, toes curling and my heart pounding against my ribcage.

*Take me, Alpha. Take me, so we could finally be one. So someone would finally love me.*

He grasped my jaw in his rough, calloused palm, and forced me to stare up at him. His eyes were a golden brown, like a swirl of caramel in black coffee. The red moonlight flooded in through the window and bounced off his sculpted face, making him look like a monstrous god, a villain who was about to claim his prey.

“You want me to take you,” Maddox murmured against me, strumming his fingers against my throat. “To claim your pretty neck?”

“Yes,” I breathed out. “Please. Tonight.”

He rested one of his knees between my legs and grinded it against my aching cunt through my pants, his warm breath on my mouth. Tingles ran up and down my arms, and I couldn’t stop myself from purring for him again.

“Be patient, Jade.” He dipped his head and kissed me again, this time softer. “I will.”

My heart pounded at the thought.

Maddox was going to mark me tonight, and this time he seemed like he meant it.

There wasn’t any turning back.

He grasped my face in his hands and pulled me toward him, crashing his lips hard against mine. The moment our lips touched, I curled my fingers into his chest, grabbed his shoulders, and pulled his body onto mine. I wanted to be wrapped up in his butterscotch scent, to drown in it.

By the end of tonight, I would be ravished and claimed.

After a few moments, he pulled away and pressed his lips against my collarbone, then down the center of my chest. He slipped his hands under my shirt. My breathing hitched. His calloused fingers dug and kneaded into my tender breasts. A rush of heat warmed my core, and I squeezed my thighs together.

“Relax,” he murmured to me.

He pulled my shirt over my head and tugged it off of me, then kissed down my chest again, his lips finding the ends of my bra near my cleavage. He groped me through the thin material, drawing his fingers against my nipples poking through it. My pussy clenched, and I tried to suppress a moan.

“I want to hear every one of your moans tonight, *mate*.” He took a shaky breath against my breast and slowly pulled down the cups of my bra, letting my breasts fall out of them. His mouth found my nipple, and he sucked it between his lips.

Tingles ran up and down my body. He stared up at me with his golden-brown eyes, nipple still between his lips, sucking harsher and harsher. He moved his knee harder against my cunt and dipped a hand between my legs, rubbing my clit.

I arched my back, a moan escaping my lips. “More...”

The pressure rose in my core, building so high that I squirmed in his hold. He held me steady and continued to rub small, torturous circles. “Your body reacts so naturally to me, Jade, like you were made for me.”

“Please, give it to me...”

“Tell me that no other man will ever get to touch you like I do.” He bit down softly on my nipple, making me moan out loud, and slipped a hand into my pants. More heat gathered in my core.

“No man will touch me,” I whispered, arching my back. He slipped a finger inside of me and thrust it in and out. He moved his fingers until my panties were soaked with my juices. I moaned again. “Goddess, I’m only yours.”

He curled his fingers inside of me, hitting my G-spot, and I came hard. My body trembled, my hands grasping at his wrists. I dug my heels into the mattress to scramble up to the headboard, the pleasure hitting me in intense waves, and all at once.

Once I had come down from my high and had sunk into the bed, Maddox pulled his fingers from my cunt, stuck them into his mouth, and sucked off all the juices while staring down at me. He grunted in response, his canines growing longer and thicker.

“You taste so fucking good, Jade.” He crawled down the bed, hooking his fingers under the hem of my pants, tugging them all the way down my body, and throwing them to the side of the room. He sat between my legs and placed his hands on my knees, every muscle in his upper body flexing.

I pulled my legs together, just admiring all that thick muscle that was *mine* tonight and every night after this. He pulled my legs apart and gazed down at my wet panties, a smirk stretching across his lips.

Lying down on his stomach, he placed his head between my legs and tore my panties off of me, placing his nose against my cunt. “Your pussy is mine,” he said, then he pressed his lips to it, thrusting a finger back into me. “You’re mine.”

After running my hands through his hair, I tugged forcefully when his tongue hit my clit. He massaged it in circles, each time a little faster. He grasped my jaw and forced me to look down at him, down into those piercing eyes. “Watch me please you.”

My cheeks flushed, my legs trembling around him.

He held my hips down on the mattress. “Is my Jade about to come again?”

I whined, my legs trembling more. “I want you to be inside of me, Maddox.”

When the words tumbled out of my throat, Maddox pulled his mouth away from my pussy and sat up, grabbing my hand and placing it on the front

of his jeans. “Feel how hard you made me, Jade.”

Gliding my hand over his bulge, I clenched and moaned out, wiggling my hips closer to him and wanting him to lose control. But then, unable to stop myself, I sat up onto my knees and undid the button on his jeans, slowly pulling them down his zipper, his cock hard against his gray briefs.

Once I dipped my head, I placed my red-stained lips on his underwear and sucked the head of his cock through the material. Then inch by inch, I pulled down his underwear to see his huge cock that was ready to stretch out my tight walls.

“You can suck my cock all you want after I mark you.” He lightly grasped my throat and pulled me up toward him, caressing my cheek with his other hand. “I’m claiming you tonight, I’m making you mine, and I’m going to be deep inside of you when I do it.”

He pushed me back onto the bed, crawled between my legs, and pressed his cock against my entrance. He brushed his canines against the side of my neck, his breath warm. “Tell me you want me, and that I’m yours.”

I curled my hand into his soft hair. “You’re mine.”

And, in that moment, he thrust himself into me. I screamed out, the pressure almost too much to handle as he pumped in and out of me slowly, licking the place on my neck where he would mark. For the second time tonight, I was on the brink of exploding with pure pleasure.

The tip of his canine pricked my skin, then he growled and sunk his teeth as deep as they would go. My body shook wildly, tingles numbing my arms, my legs, and my mind. I tilted my head to the side to give him better access to me.

Alpha Maddox had claimed me.

And I would now forever be his.

## MADDOX



When my canines sunk into Jade's neck, a wave of ecstasy shot through me and almost paralyzed me to the spot. After pulling my teeth out of her, I licked the blood pouring out from the wound. But I ached to bite her again. I needed my teeth in her neck and her little breathy moans drifting through my ears.

"Maddox," she whispered, claws digging into my back.

Tears welled up in her bright eyes, a rush of heat spreading throughout my body. Usually I loved seeing Jade's tears, but now, all I wanted to do was cradle her in my arms and tell her that everything would be okay, that I wouldn't hurt her anymore.

"Don't cry," I murmured against her lips.

"Bite me again," she said, turning her head to the other side. "I want to feel it again."

The feral animal in me stopped resisting the bond, and I sank my teeth into the other side of her neck. Nobody marked their mate twice on either side of their necks, only those with two mates. But I wanted to make sure nobody tried to take what was mine.

Four puncture wounds on either side of her neck.

Two ferocious marks.

One alpha who would kill for his mate.

Once my gums met her skin, I closed my eyes and inhaled her sweet scent, desperate for it to become a part of me. Starting from now, things would be different. I wouldn't hurt Jade anymore. I wouldn't let the pack talk shit behind her back. And I certainly wouldn't be asking Charlie or Clarissa to come over for dinner.

Jade whimpered under me, her stiff little body relaxing on the mattress. After her hands slid off my back and onto the bed beside her, I reopened my eyes and pulled my teeth from her neck, letting my saliva close and heal the wound.

This was more than a want or desire.

It was a carnal need to have Jade.

Yet after I had marked her twice, I still wanted more. I still ached for her. I had to put my mark all over her body. I needed to claim her as my own. I desired to show her that she belonged to no rogue; she belonged to an alpha.

"Goddess," she whispered, eyes closed. "I... I never thought I'd experience that."

I shoved my canines away and pressed my lips closed, rolling off of Jade and onto the bed beside her. If I said anything, I feared I'd lose control. Absolute control. I had waited nine long years to mark another mate that I didn't want to pull away from her now. My body ached to transform into my beast and mark up every inch of her body.

But I didn't trust my wolf yet to be gentle with Jade.

After all these years of torturing her, I didn't know if I could be gentle any longer.

At least... not for much longer.

"I have to go, Jade," I said, my muscles tensing, my bones about to break.

She snapped open her eyes and furrowed her brows. "Why are you leaving me?"

"Because if I don't, then I'm going to mark every inch of your body with my teeth."

Inhaling sharply, Jade stared at me with wide eyes. “Why don’t you?”

My lips curled into a smirk, canines reemerging. “You don’t want me to do that.”

Jade yanked me back onto the bed, pushed me onto my back, and climbed on top of me, her hand snaking around my neck. “You can’t tell me what I do and don’t want any more, or what I will and won’t get, Maddox.” She lowered herself back onto me for a second time tonight. “You’re mine.”



After another hour, Jade fell asleep next to me with her lilac hair in her face and swollen pink lips parted slightly. From her neck to her tits to her ass and pussy, bright red bite marks covered her body.

Claimed to the point where no other man would even think about talking to her, nevermind touching what was mine.

Once I placed a kiss on her forehead, I left Jade in the bedroom and headed out back, behind the packhouse to hunt more rogues. Tonight I had more than just a pack to guard. Now I had a mate and a luna that I’d do anything to protect.

Their numbers were slowly dwindling but they still came out to kidnap our children and rape our women. And with my mate claimed and safe upstairs in my bed, I could finally put an end to this madness soon.

But tonight I had another mission.

I wanted to find that rogue—Vex—who had confronted me the other day, the man looking for Jade and the only person who I hadn’t killed yet for her. Jade was mine now; and no filthy rogue would even get to think he could snag her.

Hours passed. Blood stained my paws. I snatched another rogue by the back of the neck and threw him off a woman from my pack, growling at her to run back to the shelter and back to her home where she’d be safe.

Two more rogues ran toward her. Saif and I teamed up, each taking one and killing it, so she could return safely. I didn't know how the hell this many rogues were still flooding onto my property, but I didn't stop until my pack was secure for now.

We only had a couple more days of this shit, hopefully.

But still... after fucking hours of searching Chaos Valley for Vex, I walked back toward the packhouse with my head hung low and my hands empty. Wherever that asshole was hiding, I'd be sure to find out tomorrow. I'd talk to Jade, pump as much information out of her as possible.

I didn't care what kind of money he gave her or jobs he presented her with. I would be the man to take care of her, and the alpha that took care of him by pulling out every single one of his canines and using them to slice his body to pieces.

Red moonlight flooded through the trees, and I inhaled sharply, a distinct scent drifting through my nostrils. My entire body tensed as I followed it through the foggy forest and around the grotesque trees to the packhouse.

At the front door, Clea stood with a wicked grin on her face and Kylie by her side.

Saif was right; Clea was back.

But... not to heal this pack. My mate looked like she was out to hurt it.

## JADE



*A*fter Maddox put his mark all over my body last night, I woke up in his empty bed. He wasn't in the corner of the room watching me this time or in his connected bathroom or even out behind the packhouse.

I pulled the blankets further up my body, and frowned. I expected him to be here when I woke up because I so desperately wanted to roll over and watch as the red moonlight glimmered across his sculpted face. For Goddess's sake, we just mated.

My heart ached.

Why did I feel so lonely? Was it because I wore his mark, but he didn't wear mine? How had I gotten so caught up in feeling good last night that the thought of claiming him didn't even cross my mind?

Fingers on my neck, I moved them across the scars that covered my body and frowned. Why couldn't my mate be here to wake up with me? I didn't even hear Kylie in the house, and it had to be at least... 8 a.m., right? Maybe.

Once I pulled on my clothes, I shuffled out of Maddox's bedroom and down the grand hallway toward the soft sound of voices. Two of them, one female and one Maddox's. I glanced out the window to see Kylie in the front with my lipstick in one fist and paint in the other.

Moving closer to the voices, I found myself hiding behind a wall and inhaling the scent of no other than our ex-luna. It was such a foul scent that I

had burned it into my memory. For so long, I had plotted to kill her for leading my father on and ruining my life.

But now... now I wondered why she stood in Maddox's living room.

In the middle of the Chaos.

With *my* fucking mate.

"Clea," Maddox started.

"Remember every night during the Chaos you'd make love to me?" she interrupted. Hands balled into fists, I glanced around the corner to see her dragging her claws up Maddox's chest. "Remember the way you marked me on the last day, when your teeth slid into my neck and you took me the way you always wanted?"

Maddox snatched her hands, yet I couldn't really see what was going on. My stomach twisted into knots, my heart hurting. I couldn't take this. I couldn't watch him fall back in love with her. He didn't wear my mark; he didn't feel what I was feeling, maybe a little but not this bad.

"What are you doing?" I asked, stepping out from behind the wall. Tears welled up in my eyes, but I fought back the urge to let any of them fall. Neither of them deserved them. "What are you doing with her, Maddox?"

Maddox dropped Clea's hands and parted his lips to speak. "Asking—"

"What is she doing here?" I asked, sharply.

Clea sneered at me, upper lip curling in disgust. "Who the hell are you?"

"I'm his mate," I said between clenched teeth.

Clea threw her head back and laughed menacingly, hiking a thumb at me. "You're seriously mated to her, Maddox. She's half your age, hunny. She doesn't know the first thing about being a woman."

I growled and lengthened my claws, charging at her. "I'm going to kill you."

So much rage boiled up inside of me. This woman slept with my father. She had ruined my pack, my family, and my life. And now she was trying to take my mate away from me too. I might've been half her age, but I would

kill this bitch.

Maddox grabbed my arms and held me back, which only made me angrier.

“Let me go!” I screamed. “I’m going to kill her.”

“You can’t,” Maddox said.

“Why? Because you still love her?” I asked, my voice cracking.

“No,” Maddox said, pressing me to his body. “Because she’s Kylie’s mother.”

Hot angry tears welled up in my eyes, and I ripped myself away from him. “It’s not fair that you’re letting her speak to you like nothing happened, like you didn’t torture the life out of my father and kick him out because of her, like you didn’t shame me all throughout my childhood because of her.”

I clenched my jaw and shoved him back so hard that he stumbled into the wall.

This was bullshit.

“She might’ve birthed Kylie, but she did nothing to mother her.” I seethed at him, my lips trembling. “You marked me last night, Maddox, in case you forgot. If you’ve decided to let her back into your home, then I’m leaving.”

And so, I stormed out the back door as Maddox called my name, shifted into my wolf, and sprinted into the Chaos where feral rogues hunted for their prey. Only catch was that I didn’t plan on being the prey of a hungry animal this time...

I had enough wrath inside me to be the predator.

And my prey: Vex Agles.

## MADDOX



Jade's sugary scent lingered heavily in the air, taunting me almost. What had I fucking done bringing Clea inside to talk? Twenty minutes ago when Clea held her daughter close with her claws near her throat, my only thought had been to remove Kylie from the situation as quickly as possible.

In turn, this bitch had gotten what she wanted.

"Rumor was that you found your mate," Clea said, stepping closer to me. I moved back.

Despite what Jade had thought, Clea hadn't touched me yet. I refused to let her.

"I didn't think that your mate would be her. She's so much younger than you, weak even." She gazed toward the back door where Jade had run off, and giggled. "Isn't that Martin's daughter, the one he always talked about while him and I were together?"

She wanted me to snap.

She loved when I snapped.

But, this time, it wasn't going to work. As much as I thought about her these past nine years, I had come to realize that I didn't care for her like I thought I did. I only wanted her to be a good mother to Kylie, but that idea had come and gone quickly.

“That’s what you came here for, isn’t it?” I growled. “You wanted Jade to find me with you. You wanted to ruin my fucking life all over again. You can’t see me happy for fucking once because all you are is a fucking miserable bitch who loves tearing people apart.”

I hadn’t asked her to come, and I really didn’t want her here.

All she cared about was herself.

“Oh, no, baby…” She smiled at me and batted her lashes. “I’ve come for you.”

Before she could reach out to touch me, I snatched her wrist in my hand again and shoved her away from me. “Leave,” I ordered, Jade’s scent disappearing from the air slowly. My heart broke into a thousand tiny shards, her pain shooting through me. I wanted to run after her to make sure she was okay, but I couldn’t leave Kylie here with Clea.

“Leave now.”

Whether she willfully left or not, I would force her out. Jade was beyond angry, and that rogue was still out there looking for her. If he found her—or even if she found him—I didn’t know if she’d be able to think straight—or want to think straight.

She had found me with Clea the night after I marked her.

I had hurt her so many times, she probably thought I was talking to Clea to hurt her too.

I wouldn’t doubt if she willingly searched for Vex and marked him to fuck with me.

And, just as if he knew that I thought about him, Jade’s phone which she had left on my counter last night, lit up with Vex’s name. Text messages. A fucking ton of them.

A ferocious growl escaped past my lips, my canines aching to kill Vex. I didn’t have any more time to spare with this bitch in front of me. Clea would never be a mother to Kylie and would never, ever be my mate again.

Despite wanting Kylie to have a good relationship with her mother, I

knew that Clea would never change for her daughter. She would still be a bitch and had been one, ever since she found out that Kylie had a disability. She refused to be around to help me or even be there for Kylie all this time.

She was only back now because of the Chaos. All those memories had come back to her, and this was the first time I realized I had no good memories of Clea. I only had bad ones. Even during the Chaos, she had been a bitch, but I brushed it off because she was my mate.

The phone lit up again with his name.

Grasping Clea's upper arm, I dragged her to the backdoor so Kylie wouldn't see, and threw her out into the yard. "The next time you come back here, I will let Jade kill you with her bare hands and pull out all your canines. You aren't my mate anymore, and I plan to keep it that way."

"You think throwing me out of your packhouse will keep me away?"

"No," I growled, howling at Saif who I caught sight of through the woods.

Saif turned his head, shifted into his human form, and hurried over to me. "Luna Clea..."

"She's not your luna anymore. I have a new one," I said to Saif, still glaring at Clea with the utmost annoyance. "Clea is no longer welcome on pack grounds. If anyone catches her back here, capture her and bring her to the dungeon."

Saif grabbed Clea by the wrist. "You found another mate? Who is it?"

I pressed my lips together, heart racing.

"Go on, Maddox," Clea purred. "Tell him who it is."

"Jade King is my mate."

"But..." Saif stared at me in shock. "Her father forced himself upon Luna Clea—"

"No," I growled. "He didn't. Clea cheated on me willingly."

The truth burned. All these years, the pack thought that Martin King forced himself upon Clea. It was a lie that she spread throughout the pack to

make herself look better, a lie that I would allow no more. She had been the cause of so much pain Jade went through, and I had willingly put up with it for so long.

Because... it was a lie I wanted to believe but couldn't.

"Jade is my mate, and nobody talks shit about her anymore," I roared. "She's mine." I grabbed him by the throat. "If I catch you or anyone talking bad about your luna, I will have your fucking head. Do you understand me?"

Saif sucked in a breath and nodded. "Yes, Alpha."

"Now get her off my property," I said between clenched teeth and pushed them away.

Saif pulled a crying, shouting, and fucking crazy Clea through the forest. Without a second thought, I slammed the door, grabbed Jade's buzzing phone from my counter, and hurried to the front yard. I scooped Kylie up in my arms—since Ellen was busy with her new mate—and rushed through the thick fog toward Jain's Bakery, hoping Jade had ran there.

Howls echoed through the deep, dark sky, the stench of blood heavy in the air. Kylie wrapped her arms tightly around my neck and stared with wide eyes at the beasts that crawled in the darkness. "Daddy, who was that woman?"

"Nobody, Kylie," I said, the thought killing me inside.

All I wanted was for Kylie to have a motherly figure in her life.

"It was nobody," I repeated, more for myself than for her.

When the phone buzzed again, I found myself clicking the *answer* button on the screen. Vex's face appeared on the other side, a deep and fresh scar across his eyebrow. "Where the fuck are—" He stopped short and curled his lip into a grimace. "What the hell are you doing answering Jade's phone?"

"Stop calling her," I growled.

Kylie clung onto me harder. "Daddy..."

"Where is Jade?"

"She's fucking nowhere, and she's fucking nobody to you. Stop calling

her.”

Vex paused, then chuckled. “She’s not there with you, is she?”

A growl escaped my lips.

“She ran out on you, like I knew she fucking would. You’re a pussy to her.”

“Daddy,” Kylie sniffled. “What is he saying?”

Jain’s Bakery light drifted through the fog, and I ran even faster. I needed to get out and find Jade as quickly as humanly possible. I couldn’t have this piece of shit find her and force her to claim him. I couldn’t.

“She’s out in the Chaos. A vulnerable, sexy she-wolf for me to claim.”

“She’s marked and she’s mine,” I growled, venom dripping from every word. “Mine.”

“Not if she marks me first.”

Vex shut off the phone.

Fuck.

I ran faster.

Once I made it to Jain’s Bakery, I kicked open the doors with my boot, the coffee-house playlist drifting through my ears. I inhaled deeply to see if Jade had come here, but only smelled the thick aroma of bread that hit me as hard as the Chaos had. Jain walked to the front in a red apron and smiled at us. “Alpha.”

I placed Kylie down beside me and grabbed her hand. “Have you seen Jade?”

Jain wrinkled her forehead and hurried around the counter toward me.

“No, is something wrong?”

Pressing my lips together, I felt my heart breaking.

Fuck. I screwed up. I fucking screwed this up. It hadn’t even been a day yet.

“Alpha, please, calm down,” Jain said, placing a hand on my shoulder.

Unable to stop myself, I snatched myself away from her and extended my

canines. “My mate is gone.” The words came out harsh and throaty. Anger rushed through me. Of course, there was something wrong. “My mate is fucking gone.”

Ushering me toward the front door, Jain turned the open sign to closed and grabbed Kylie’s hand from me. “Go find her. I’ll keep watch on Kylie.” Before I could run through the door, she grabbed my shoulder again. “If I know anything about Jade, she’s probably with that rogue, Vex Agles. He hangs out near the Reaper Spines mountain range. You shouldn’t go alone.”

But I didn’t have any time to gather my pack warriors. They were busy fighting rogues and protecting my people and land. It was my job to protect my mate, my property, my Jade. I had to leave now, even if that meant putting myself in danger.

“Alpha, please, don’t go alone,” Jain called once I had run out of the bakery.

Yet... I had already decided.

Finding Jade was more important than my life.

## JADE



*I* overreacted.

I knew that I did.

Sprinting through the red-tinted fog, I slowed once I approached Reaper Spines and transformed into my human form, resting against a tree and wondering why I had even come out this far, what possessed me to get that angry for someone like *him*.

Maddox hadn't even made a move toward Clea or advanced on his ex-wife, but the mark on my neck was making me over-possessive of him, and it was driving me fucking crazy. All I could think about were those what-ifs.

What if Maddox still loved her?

What if Maddox wanted to be a family again?

What if Maddox had marked me to hurt me more? What if he planned on rejecting me? What if this was all part of his plan to watch me suffer because of all my father's wrongdoings? He said it wasn't, but... I could never be certain.

Twigs snapped to my left, and I kicked myself off the tree trunk, scanning the woods for any sign of unknown rogues. Around here, especially after hunting with Vex, I knew a lot of rogues, but that didn't mean they all liked me. Mostly, they stayed away because Vex told them too, not because they were afraid of me.

But now that I was alone, they probably thought they could do as they pleased.

Someone clamped down on my arms from behind, and I screamed, the sound echoing through the mountain range. “Relax,” Vex said into my ear, his nose trailing up the side of my neck. “It’s just me.”

“Just you,” I whispered, suddenly regretting this decision.

I should’ve gone home, or to Jain’s Bakery, or somewhere else.

Why had I wanted to see Vex again? Because I was pissed off at Maddox?

Fuck that.

“You’ve been hiding from me, Jade,” Vex purred in my ear, his blond hair brushing against my cheek. “I’ve been searching Chaos Valley for you, looking in every pack to mate you. Who knew you’d show right up at my doorstep?”

A distraction. I needed a distraction. Something.

“I was looking for you,” I said.

Fuck.

How was I going to get out of this? I could kill him, but—I scanned the forest—there must’ve been twenty rogue wolves out here watching. It was as if they had been hunting with Vex or were under his control now. Only Vex would use the Chaos to gain more fucking power.

“I’ve got a present for you,” Vex said, taking my hand and bringing me into his dirty little cabin. It smelled of dead carcasses and rotting animals, feces and... and Maddox. “I want to show you how serious I am about us.”

My stomach twisted, my chest tightening.

Vex opened the door to his home, and I stopped dead in my tracks. Surrounded by two shifted rogues and bound with silver chains, Maddox sat on his knees with a busted lip and large claw wounds in his bare abdomen.

What the fuck was he doing here? Why had he been in the forest alone?

“There were too many of them, Jade,” Maddox whispered. “A whole

pack of rogues.”

I had never seen this man look so broken before, and I kinda liked it.

He had hurt me so many fucking times. He deserved this shit.

After he closed the door behind us, Vex shoved me toward Maddox and stepped right behind me, so every inch of him was pressing against my back. He touched me like he owned me, which pissed me the fuck off even more than Maddox did.

“Kill him, and I’ll be your mate.”

Grinding my teeth together, I wanted to growl at him that I didn’t want a mate. I didn’t know how many times I had told him that already; I lost count. He didn’t listen ever and selfishly wanted me for himself.

Maybe it was this stupid mate mark on my neck, but I... I... I didn’t want Vex anymore. Hell, I never really did. For some fucked up reason, I wanted the man who tortured me every day since I was eleven years old, the immature alpha who couldn’t deal with his mate cheating on him so he took it out on me, my mate who had marked every inch of my body last night.

“I came looking for you,” Maddox whispered to me, his voice hoarse.

Still, I was so wary of Maddox.

Vex moved closer to me and placed his filthy hands on my shoulders, claws brushing up and down my bare arms and making me shiver. “If you kill him, you’ll finally be happy again, Jade. Isn’t this what you’ve always wanted?”

“It is,” I whispered.

Because that had really been my dream for nine long years.

Pain shot through my body as I stared at Maddox who knelt before us.

“So, do it,” Vex whispered into my ear, drawing his nasty claws up and down my arms. “Kill him, and all your troubles will disappear.”

Vex was right.

My troubles would disappear if I killed Maddox, but I wanted those troubles now.

And because I was an annoyed-at-the-fucking-world, over-possessive and crazy bitch, I would do anything to keep Maddox safe. And by anything, I meant anything. Maddox's mark was all over my body, and I would claim him too before the end of the Chaos.

Nothing and nobody would stop me.

Not Clea.

Not Vex.

And definitely not Maddox.

## MADDOX



*M*y mate stared down at me with blood-stained lilac hair and so much hurt in her eyes that I had caused. Part of me thought I deserved this for everything I had put her through since she was an eleven-year-old kid. The other part of me vowed to never give up on her. Jade had my mark all over her body.

I didn't care who else wanted her or how much she hated me.

"I'm your mate, Jade," I said. "I didn't do anything with Clea."

"You're just a man who loves to hurt me," Jade said, swallowing hard. "You're just a broken alpha who will never be happy without a luna." She growled down at me. "You're my mate, and I hate you."

My lips trembled at her wrath, her pain. I could feel it seeping into me, and I wanted to take it all away. For the first time ever, I didn't want Jade to hurt anymore. My mate shouldn't be in agony by my side.

She had every fucking right to do what she was about to do.

Jade turned her head toward Vex and extended her canines. "But I hate you more."

Vex roared back at her. "He has done nothing but hurt you!"

She stepped toward him. "You thought I could be bought out with a couple hundred dollars. You thought you could hunt me down to try to rape me, force me to kill my own mate, then put a claim on me yourself. You're

nothing but a filthy rogue, Vex. One that I have wanted to kill for years now.”

Shifting into her wolf, Jade growled at him and Vex followed suit, transforming into his wolf who was nearly double her size. Before I could stop anything or get out of these stupid fucking chains, they started grappling with each other, tearing fur out of flesh, desperate to bleed the other dry.

Clea would've just let them have her, but Jade was fighting for me.

With my hands bound in silver chains behind my back, I stood to my full height and growled to pull the attention off Jade and toward me. No fucking way was I going to let Jade have all the fun killing these assholes.

One sprinted at me in wolf form, foaming at the mouth. I smashed my heel into his face, knocked him onto his side, and crushed his skull in with my foot. Another barreled toward me and leaped in the air. I ducked out of the way, then I round-house kicked him in the stomach. He flew to the other side of the room, smashing against the window and decorating himself with tiny, sharp glass pieces.

Running toward Jade, I lunged forward and dug my extended canines into another's back, throwing him toward the window as well. He hit the other rogue with a thud, his head smashing against a stolen vase.

Two more rogues came running in through the front door, already shifted and mouth dripping with blood. They sprinted at Jade, about to sink their teeth into her neck while she fought Vex. How many of these fuckers did Jade hang out with?

I stepped in front of Jade, letting them bite me instead, and kicked them both to the other side of the room with the others. Four wolves against one alpha who wasn't shifted and was bound with silver, what could possibly go wrong?

They came at me all at once, teeth latching into my human skin, claws digging into my flesh. Using sheer force, I twisted my body, throwing one to the other side of the room, smashed another with my foot, grabbed one with

my bound hands behind my back and sank my claws into his throat. The fourth one took a chunk of muscle out of my thigh and spit it back at me.

Someone smacked into me from behind, Vex's carcass hitting the dusty old wood. Covered in blood, Jade tore the last three rogues apart piece by piece, their limbs flying across the room and forming a pile by the window.

Once she had finally shifted back into her human, she collapsed onto the ground, naked, and blew out a couple deep breaths. She stayed quiet and stood, then walked toward me, her lips pressed in a tight, straight line. "I still hate you."

Unable to stop myself, I smiled at her. "I hate you too."

She looked up at me for the first time after killing the rogues and shoved my shoulder, lips curling into the smallest of smiles. "Don't push it." After undoing my silver chains, Jade grabbed my hand tightly in hers. "Come on. We're going home, and I'm going to mark your neck. As annoying as you may be, you're mine, Maddox, and no other woman—especially your ex-mate—is going to take you from me."

## JADE



I shoved Maddox onto his bed and climbed on top of him, ready to finally claim my mate. Jain promised to bring Kylie back in a couple hours, so Maddox and I had some time to ourselves, and I didn't plan on wasting it.

For once in my life, I finally felt content. Well, sorta.

This was the closest damn thing to happy that I had been in a long time.

Maddox flipped us over, so I sank into his mattress, the memory foam forming to our bodies. He brushed his fingers against the inside of my thigh, making me clench, then skimmed them across my bare pussy, rubbing circles around my needy, little clit. Laying sloppy, wet kisses down my neck and over his marks, he pushed two fingers inside of me.

My pussy made sobby, wet sounds as he thrust his fingers in and out of me, moving them wildly as if he let his feral, dominant alpha loose. I grabbed his wrist and moaned into his ear, drawing my tongue across my canines.

"Maddox," I whispered.

Continuing to move his fingers inside, he massaged my G-spot. After a few moments, he pulled his fingers out of me and brushed them across my bottom lip, giving me just a taste, just a single taste. And then, he stuck them into his mouth, wrapped his lips around his fingers, and sucked them dry.

"Fuck, Jade." He let out a ferocious growl and pressed his hardening cock

against my thigh, every muscle in his body tensing. There was no controlling the beast inside of him, the alpha that so desperately waited nine years to finally have me. “You taste sweeter and sweeter every time I taste you.”

He pressed his lips against my collarbone, down the center of my chest, grabbing the top of my tank and tearing it down the middle. Like a ravenous monster, he sucked my nipple into his mouth and tugged on it, his hands moving up and down the sides of my body until they reached my breasts and kneaded.

My breathing hitched, and I bit down on my lip, trying so hard not to give him the satisfaction of hearing me moan. At least, not yet. Maddox did have an ego, and I planned to slowly bring him back down to reality. *Slowly.*

Yet, heat warmed my core, and I suppressed a moan between my pressed lips.

“Moan for me,” Maddox demanded against my breasts.

“No.”

“No?” Maddox asked, as if nobody had ever defied him before. He placed his lips back on mine again and slipped his tongue into my mouth, his butterscotch taste filling me. “Are you sure you want to tell me no? You know I don’t take defiance lightly.”

When I refused to respond, his intense brown eyes turned gold. I growled in excitement, recognizing the wolf inside of him as my mate. And Goddess, I so desperately wanted to claim him now.

“Take off your pants,” I ordered. “I need to mate you.”

Not taking my orders—what alpha did?—he tugged on my nipple softly, his tongue swirling around it every so often. Tingles ran up and down my body from my fingers to my toes. He stared up at me with his golden eyes, my nipple still between his plump lips, and his hard cock brushing against my inner thigh. He sucked harsher and harsher on my breast, his hand slipping between my legs to rub my clit again.

I arched my back, pressing my lips together hard.

“Does my Jade like this?” he mumbled against my breast.

“I’m not going to say it again, Maddox,” I said between gritted teeth. I furrowed my brows together and squirmed in his hold, but he held me still and continued to rub small, torturous circles around me.

Another throaty growl escaped his lips as he bit down harsher on my nipple. “I’m not going to give it to you, until you answer me.” He slapped my clit with his hand, making my body jerk into the air and driving the pressure in my core higher every moment. “Does my mate like this?”

I growled, unable to hold myself back.

Mate.

I needed my mate now.

“I love it,” I said in a breathy whisper. “Now, give it to me.”

Maddox rested my thighs on his shoulders and dipped his head, face hovering centimeters from my wet pussy. “You are mine,” he said against me, his butterscotch breath warming my core. “This”—he pressed his lips to my clit, tongue flicking out against it—“is mine, and fuck does it taste so good.”

He stuck his face deeper between my legs and ate my pussy so savagely that my legs started trembling uncontrollably. I curled my hand into his hair, arching my back and trying to breathe steadily, but every time this man touched me with his tongue, I wanted to just scream out in pleasure.

Grasping my jaw, he forced me to look back down at him. “Watch me pleasure you.”

My cheeks flushed, the pressure almost too high now, and I stared down at him. He pushed a finger inside of me, and I yelped out. When he heard me moan, he massaged my clit with his tongue faster, fingers pounding into me.

“Maddox...”

He curled his fingers around my G-spot, and I moaned louder than I ever had before. My fingers curled into his hair, my abdomen tensing, my body convulsing from the pure intensity.

“Scream for me, baby. Just like that.”

Wave after wave of pleasure rushed through me, and I rested my head back against the pillows for the briefest moment, just enjoying the rush. “The next time I come,” I started, grabbing the back of his neck and pulling him closer to me. “You’re going to be inside me.”

Maddox grunted and undid his pants, shoving them to the ground and crawling over to me. He grinded his hard cock against my pussy. After snaking his hand around the front of my throat, he pulled me closer to him and kissed me softly.

“Tell me you’re mine,” Maddox said.

“I’m yours.”

“Tell me you won’t ever leave me.”

Gently grasping his face in my hands, I stared into his golden eyes that held so much lust and so much hurt. “Maddox, I will never leave you,” I murmured against his lips. And in that moment, he thrust into me.

My pussy clenched around his long, thick cock. He had been inside of me a couple times before, but tonight felt different. Tonight Maddox was giving himself to me after being betrayed by his last mate, he was trusting me with his heart and his soul.

“Oh my Goddess, Maddox,” I moaned, digging my claws into his back. “Faster, please.”

He wrapped both his arms underneath mine and gripped my shoulders, using me to pump harder and faster into me. The pressure rose higher and higher in my core, and I curled my toes. It felt so good, so fucking good.

“Mark me,” Maddox whispered into my ear. “Make me yours.”

Body trembling with pleasure from his words, I curled my hand into his soft hair and whispered back, “You’re mine,” then, I sunk my canines into his neck until my gums met his skin.

Maddox shivered but continued to pump in and out of me slowly. He sucked on my mark, making me moan again. Tingles shot up my body, pure

ecstasy pumping through me. I stared up at my mate as I came, feeling him still inside of me.

I bucked my hips back and forth until I felt Maddox tense and spill his cum inside of me. He brushed his thumb against my cheek in soothing circles, and I smiled up at him feeling so... so... happy.

Yes, *I*—out of all people—was happy with a mate.

A mate!

After a few moments, Maddox rolled off me and stared up at the ceiling, intertwining our fingers on the bed. “Fuck, I never thought I’d say this to another woman again, but I think I love you already.”

A giggle escaped my lips, and I rolled over onto my stomach. “A couple days ago, you wanted to torture the living beast out of me, and now it’s love?” As much as I wanted it to be, we still had a long way to go.

“You’re good with my daughter,” Maddox said, smiling. “Not many people have truly cared about her, and if I wasn’t alpha, I doubt they’d care at all. You loved her even when you hated me.”

“Even when?” I said, scrunching my nose and secretly hating all this mushy, cutesy stuff. “I still hate you, Maddox. Don’t be getting your hopes up just yet.” I jumped up from the bed and tugged on some clothes, my body turned away from him so he wouldn’t see the big, stupid smile on my face.

“You can say that all you want, Jade.” Maddox chuckled. “I don’t believe it.”

Suddenly, I heard the front door open from deep within the house and tossed Maddox some clothes. “Sounds like Kylie is home. Cover yourself. I don’t want her thinking something weird happened between us.” And maybe... I also didn’t want Jain to see my mate.

Sure, she was older and already had a mate.

But Maddox was mine.

When we walked into the living room, Jain and Kylie were in standing in the foyer.

“Jade!” Kylie said, running toward us from the foyer with chocolate ice cream smeared across her face and paint covering her fingers as if she had been finger-painting Jain’s Bakery. “You’re here!”

“I’m here, Kylie.”

She squinted her eyes at me, then gasped. “You have a mark on your neck, Jade!” Kylie said, jumping up and down and tugging on my hand. “I want to see it better. Come down here.” When I crouched down to her level, she dragged her fingers across it. “It’s red like your lipstick.”

“It is.”

“Does this mean that you have a mate?”

“Yes,” I said, sneaking a glance up at Maddox.

For a split moment, Jain gave me a knowing look, pride in her eyes.

“No!” Kylie wrapped her arms around my shoulders and hugged me close. “I don’t want you to leave. I want you to be here forever. Please say your mate is in our pack. Please. Please. Please. Please. Please.”

Maddox grabbed Kylie’s shoulder and gently tugged her back. “Be gentle, Squirt.”

“But, Daddy!” Kylie cried.

I wrapped my hands around her small torso. “Wanna meet my mate?”

Kylie wiped her eyes, then nodded. “I’m going to punch him for taking you away.”

After stifling a laugh, I turned her around to look at Maddox who crouched in front of her. She stared at him for a few moments, brows furrowed together, then wiped her watery eyes. “Your mate is... Daddy?” She grinned and looked back at me. “Really?”

“Yep.”

“Yay!” Kylie cheered, wrapping one arm around me and the other around Maddox. She looked between us, grinning like a madwoman. “That means I can wear Jade’s lipstick all the time now!”

My lips curled into a smile, a giggle escaping between them. Maddox and

I have a long way to go. We had hated each other for so long. It was hard to just forget something like that, but I could honestly say that right now, at this very moment, I was happy.

**The End**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emilia Rose is an international bestselling author of steamy paranormal romance.

Highly inspired by her study abroad trip to Greece in 2019, Emilia loves to include greek and roman mythology in her writing. She graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a degree in psychology and a minor in creative writing in 2020 and now writes novels as her day-job.

With over 18 million combined story views online and a growing presence on reading apps, she hopes to inspire other young novelists with her story of growth and imagination, so that they go on to write the stories that need to be told.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Melziz, Letstalkbooktalk, Quell T Fox, and UnicornQueen12: Thank you for helping shape Kylie's character!