

Alpha' s Regret–My Luna Has A Son Chapter 114

Another four weeks later.

Everly POV

Mum was getting blood tests, and the vaccine needed to be administered every few days now. I have just hit the 2nd trimester, and the Hotel was only a few weeks from finished. Valen sold most of his shares to pay half the debt owed to Nixon. Still, Nixon pressed for more, and we had enough.

Valen's scientists had managed to replicate the vaccine a week ago, and now they were working on finding a cure. Yet as we suspected, my mother was becoming immune to the vaccine, and with it came early-onset dementia. She was losing her grip on reality. Dad was beside himself, and Ava was devastated.

Macey and Zoe were doing everything at the moment, from the school run to managing the renovations, now that the structure was fully fixed. Kalen ran the Homeless shelter while Dad worked for my pack and Valen his.

Life was hectic, and Ava and I were tasked with watching over mum, which meant taking her to these appointments. We also carried tranquilizers everywhere we went with her, just in case. But she could seemingly pull herself out of it before anything wrong happened.

Valen hated that I offered to help watch over her, said I was putting myself at risk, and he was right, but she was my mother. The woman taught me to walk, speak, and use a d**n spoon, and

I knew if our roles were reversed and it was his father, he would be by his side too.

Mum thanks the nurse that took her blood before the doctor administered the next dose, stabbing it into her arm, and she shivers. Her hair was beginning to grey, and she was aging quickly. All this because of Nixon. We had filed against Nixon to have his pack dismantled. My father went to the media two nights ago and outed everything, including the debt and how Nixon was the one who injected my mother.

We were waiting for the repercussions, everyone on edge since Dad went lives across the city. Nixon was officially under investigation, and the werewolf council was now involved.

Unfortunately, that meant my father was also under investigation C;){x6:. forced to remain in his pack territory, the same as Nixon. It was also another reason why I had to help Ava with mum.

Dad couldn't leave pack borders, and until I married Valen, he had to stay on the opposite side of town, and the vaccine, now that Nixon wouldn't administer it, could only be given on Valen's territory. The investigation was a slow process that would buy us time, maybe not much with tensions on the rise.

Riots had started in the streets already, the city wanting answers. Nixon's pack had gone quiet. They don't leave their borders, and only trucks with supplies have entered since he found himself in hot water.

Mum was in a cheery mood as we left, almost childlike and giddy as she climbed in the car. Ava sat next to her. She was

deteriorating fast, and the scientists that are working on the cure were working around the clock. More rogues had gone missing, more turning up along the borders as forsaken, which only amped up Nixon's claims that they were deliberately turning forsaken to overrun the city.

Speculation and theories hung over the entire city like a dark cloud, over whose claims to believe. Clipping my seatbelt, my phone started ringing, and I quickly answered it, seeing Zoe's name pop up on the screen.

"Hey, what's up?" I asked.

"I need you to pick up the kids for me. We have sprung a leak. And the fire alarms, for some reason, turned on and have yet to turn off. Macey is also locked in the basement because it tripped the locks, and I am currently standing in water to my knees," she sighs.

Great, this is all we needed. This new tech system was becoming a pain in the a*s. So many sensors and I was second-guessing the whole thing

"Is Macey alright? Is it flooding down there?"

"Yeah, she is fine. Currently eating all the chocolate and drinking all the wine. At least we know the basement is waterproof," Zoe laughs. I chuckle. Bad news, but we would live.

"The damage?"

"Costly," she answers, and I groan.

“Okay, I will grab the kids.” I glance at my phone screen to see I had to get them now and curse.

“I may need to drop mum home first. I only have five seats in this car, and I have mum and Ava with me,” I tell her, which means I would be late when I see Tatum outside walking directly toward us. S**t! He must have followed us out. He was on security at the clinic, and he had tried to stop me on the way in but got called away.

“Never mind, I have a solution,” I tell her hanging up, just as Tatum taps on my window. I push the door open and climb out.

“I thought I missed you,” he says, tugging on the tie around his neck to loosen it.

“Nope, still here. And I kinda need to ask you a favor,” I tell him.

“Great! Then maybe you could do me a favor?” he asks in return. I knew what he wanted, and we had all been at Macey for weeks about it, but she refused to listen. The woman was stubborn, but this was the first time I had spoken to Tatum. Usually, all messages came through Valen, to me, to Macey. It was driving me insane!

“You first,” I tell him.

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“Macey has not answered a single call from me. She refuses to speak to me, and I can’t even mind-link with her since she isn’t a pack member.”

“Well, I have a solution to your problem, too, since you are about to solve mine,” I chuckle.

“I’m all ears,” he says with a smile.

“Macey is stuck in the basement, but it has an intercom. Zoe is held up, and I need to get the kids from school,

including Taylor. Come with me and help pick them up. I don’t really want them in the car with mum,” I whisper, and he glances behind me and nods his head.

“Now that I can do. I haven’t seen Tay in ages. Wait! Will Macey be okay with that? “ he asks, and I shrug. It was either that or I

will be 20 minutes late getting them by the time I drive mum back home.

“Well, I am out of options, so she’ll get over it,” I tell him.

“You sure?”

“She has no choice. Besides, you should both talk. I am sick of passing notes for you both,” I tell him, opening my door.

“I’ll meet you at the school,” he says, and I nod. We pulled up out front, and I quickly raced in and got the kids from their classes. Valen’s pack school was under heavy security at the moment. All children were being required to be signed out with the growing missing reports of out with the growing missing reports of the rogues, Better to be safe than sorry.

Walking back out to the car, my phone rings, and I pull it from my pocket and answer it. My father was on the other end.

“I am just about to drop her home,” I tell him.

“No, don’t. Investigators just showed up. I was ringing to see if you could hang onto her a bit longer? She doesn’t do well with strangers in the house, and I currently have seven with warrants,” he tells me. F**k! Could anything else go wrong today?

I pinch the bridge of my nose in frustration. “That’s fine. I will figure it out.”

“Why? What happened?” he asked.

“Nothing; I have the kids, is all,”

“She won’t hurt them,” yet I could hear thatnarin hicuaian
the worry in his voice.

“It’s fine. Tatum will drop the girls off, and I will ask Kalen to get Valarian. Valen doesn’t want Valarian around her when it is only Ava and me since I can’t shift,” I tell him and Dad sighs.

“As soon as they leave, I will send someone to come get her,” he replies.

“Okay,” I tell him, hanging up. The kids look up at me, but I shake my head. Walking out of the school. Taylor spots

Tatum and squeals, running ahead of me.

“Hey Tay!” he says, scooping her up, and she wraps her arms around his neck before showing him her pasta necklace around hers. She takes it off before wrapping it around his neck.

“Aw, thanks,” he says, pecking her cheek.

“Are we coming back home soon?” she asks, and I know she must be confused. Tatum had been part of her life for months now, only to wake up and not see him again.

“I’m working on it. And I am hoping to see your mother this afternoon,” he says before looking at me. “I only have two car seats in the car. Her old one and my sister’s daughter’s one.”

“On it!” Ava calls out from where she was leaning on the car smoking, I give her a disapproving look and she rolls her eyes, tossing it and pulling Valarian’s car seat from out of Valen’s car I was driving. We spent a few minutes anchoring it before buckling the kids in.

“Change of plans. Mum is staying with me for a few more hours, so can you swing by my place before you drop the girls off? Ava texted Zoe on the way over to tell her you were dropping the kids over. She also assured me that Macey was still locked in the basement.” I chuckle, knowing it had been fixed, and Zoe was just keeping her locked in there. 1

“I feel like a d**k,” Tatum says.

“Yeah, well, she thinks you left because she can’t have kids,” I tell him.

“Well, if she would let me explain, that wasn’t the reason I left,” he says while shaking his head.

“Then why did you leave?” Ava asks, her tone coming off the defensive. He looked back in the windows, ensuring the kids weren’t listening

“Macey said she never wanted kids. She made that clear. I thought I could change her mind. And then she told me, and I felt a little angry that she didn’t tell me. But more because I had been bugging her about kids for weeks!” He groaned.

“I even went and bought baby stuff. I wondered why she got so angry and tossed it out. Then the next day, she told me, and I haven’t heard from her since,” he says.

“It will work out,” I tell him.

“Yeah, but I feel like s**t! My sister went through IVF for years before having Sam. Had I known, I wouldn’t have pushed so hard or at all. My sister hated when people mentioned anything baby-related or asked when she would have kids. I became one of those people. That’s why I left.” Tatum growls, shaking his head.

3

“I was angry but more embarrassed than anything. I am happy just having Taylor Even though her toy collection takes up half our house!” he chuckles.

“Well, Zoe locked her in the basement. So now she has no choice but to hear her out. “Ava says. He nods his head and turns to the driver’s door.1

“And Tatum ?” I call, and he stops looking at me.

“Every person she has dated walked the same day she told them. She held off only twice hoping they would stavance they twice, hoping they would stay once they knew her, but they also walked. The only reason she didn’t tell you is that she was worried about losing you.”

“I know that. But I wasn’t going anywhere,” he answers.

“But you! She didn’t know that is why you left. Before you, she tried dating, and all of them walked out halfway through the first date,” I tell him, and Tatum frowns. He nods his head before climbing into the car. I go back to mine and climb into the driver’s seat, and Ava climbs in the back with mum.

I had Ava text Kalen on the drive home. He would be half an hour. We were just down the end of the street from home when static went over the radio. I flicked the station over to find them all the same when the traffic lights suddenly went out up head. I peered up at the sky, wondering if a storm was brewing, yet the overcast day was the same.

The sky hadn't darkened more. I glanced at Ava, whose face was scrunched up as she peered at her phone. She was playing some game on it.

"I have no cell service," she says, and I reach over and pass my phone to her, and she unlocks it.

"Neither do you," she says just as the tornado sirens blare. However, the sirens weren't used for tornado warnings. No, we never got tornadoes here, and I hadn't heard that noise since I was a kid.

My eyes widen, and I peer at Tatum's car behind me when Valen's voice and my father's booms through the mind link.

"All warriors to the borders! Everyone else, get inside and lock your door!" I swallowed, and my mother was blissfully unaware as she spoke to herself. She looked at me and smiled. 1

"What's that noise?" she asked. Neither of us answers her, and I glance at Ava.

She stared back and looked petrified when Valen mind-linked me.

“Get home and lock the doors!”

“How many? And where?” I ask, opening the link to Marcus, Zoe, and Tatum to join.

“Get home and lock the door, Everly!” Valen snaps.

“Valen, how many?!” I snarled. He doesn’t answer and I could feel his fear through the bond.

“Hundreds,” he says.

“The girls?” Zoe screeches through the link.

“I have them and Valarian. I’m behind Everly now,” Tatum chimes in as we pull into the hotel car park. The shutters were rolling down on the lower-level windows and securing the doors. I roll my window down, waving Tatum toward the underground car park and he gives me a thumbs up.

“Zoe, get to the basement! I will get to Casey!” Marcus orders her, and she whimpers before being shoved out of the link.

“Where are they coming in?” Tatum asks

“Everywhere!” Marcus and Valen said before the mind-link turned to chaos and I nearly ran into a pillar before I forced everyone out. We pull up and start ripping the kids from the cars, and my mother shoves them toward the elevators, finally coming back to her senses. “Is that?” she asks, looking at Ava, who nods to her.

Valarian hits the elevator button, but the doors don't open. The emergency generators didn't operate them, leaving the stairs.

“F**k!” The roller shutters start dropping as we rush the kids to the fire exit. The bells sound as I rip the door open, and we usher the kids inside when snarling growls echo through the underground car park.

Tatum pivots just as a heap rush inside the parking garage. He rips his shirt off and growls and they pause observing their threat before he looks at me over his shoulder. “Get inside, Luna!” my heart raced as I stared at the forsaken stalking into the place.

Tatum!” I called out. Tatum’s eyes were on the forsaken, and he was too focused on them circling him.

“Inside, Luna! Now!” he roared before shifting as they ran at him. My eyes widened, and I rushed through the door, slamming it shut and locking it. Turning around, I see the kid’s frightened face peering back at me.

“Tatum?” Taylor says, her eyes on the door where vicious growls and banging came from

“He’s okay. He will be okay,” I tell Taylor while turning her and pushing her up the stairs. Ava stares at me. I nod to her, and her eyes turn glassy, but she nods once, pushing mum up the stairs. We were locked in the stairwell, all the doors locked as we climbed the levels.

“Valen, we can’t get inside!” I called through the link. I got no answer, meaning he was blocking me out of whatever was

happening outside. We were halfway up the stairwell when we heard the banging on the door below.

“Tatum!” Taylor squeals, rushing back down, and I just grabbed her before she got past me when I heard the door burst open below. Ava looks over the side, and the blood drains from her face, and I glance over to see Forsaken rushing up the steps.

“Run!” I screamed. Ava grabs Valarian and Mum. She was struggling to climb the stairs. She was exhausted, as she always was after being given the vaccine.

“Get to the roof!” I screamed while grabbing Casey and Taylor.

Mum rips her hand from Ava. “I’m slowing you down. Get the kids up!” she growls at Ava, who looks at me. I place Taylor on the ground, and Ava’s hand locks around her wrist. I grab Valarian and Ava grabs Casey too.

“Valarian, like we practiced at training, “I tell him.

“Don’t look back. Don’t stop,”

“Mum.” Valarian stammers with tear filled eyes, and his lip quivers.

“Don’t look back. Don’t stop,” I repeat, and he nods. Seeing the fear on his face made me want to hug him, but he listened and took off running up the steps while Ava ripped the girls up them.

“Three more flights, mum,” I tell her. She kept trying to pull my hand from

She kept trying to pull my hand from hers, but I snarled at her before commanding her.

“Move faster! Now!” I ordered. I heard them get onto the roof while vicious snarls came from below, but the command worked as she was forced to move quicker. Only they were gaining ground fast, and we were one set of steps from the roof when I heard a snarl behind me.

Mum freezes, and so do I. Turning slowly, I find two forsaken on the steps prowling and stalking up the steps toward us when my mother’s hand grips the back of my shirt.

“You’re gonna run for me now, baby girl, “she murmurs as we both walk backward up the stairs as they stalked us. Their fur was falling out and what was left was matted, blood dripping from their muzzles as they snapped their teeth and snarled while creeping closer up the steps.

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My hands hit the door, jarring them with the force as I burst onto the roof. Ava screamed and ripped the kids behind her body, using herself as a shield, and I twisted, slamming it shut.

The racket coming from the stairwell was deafening as I stared at the door where I had just abandoned my mother pulling my gaze from the door. Ava rushed over, jamming a piece of a broken pipe she ripped off from somewhere through the handle and line that ran to the vents on the roof above the door.

Yet all I could think was, I left her in there. I ran and left her behind. Ava whimpers as she secures the bar; I didn’t have to tell

her. She knew because mum didn't come out behind me. Yet as she turned to look at me, I could see her heartbreak.

My entire body shook with adrenaline and shock. I left her. I thought when a tiny hand slipped into mine. Looking down, I find Valarian looking at me.

"Grandma will be okay," he says, only I knew she wouldn't be. I swallowed and blinked back tears before turning to him and picking him up. "Yep. She found another open door," I tell him while walking over to the girls. I placed him beside the girls, where they were huddled on the ground by the air conditioner vent.

Ava moves to the ledge of the building, and I follow her, checking over my shoulder to make sure the kids don't follow. She looks over, and so do I, and the City was in utter chaos and ruins. Buildings in the distance were on fire, screams rang out loudly, and a frenzied battle could be seen from here on the main street. Warriors were trying to hold the forsaken back from the borders. Valen was right. There were hundreds of them. They just kept coming.

The street directly below us was a scene from a horror movie as our men tried to keep them back. Two forsaken were dragging another wolf off, and I didn't want to think what they were doing to him as they yelped loudly.

"Her tether?" Ava asked me, and I swallowed.

“Not broken yet. She is fighting,” I whispered, staring out blankly. I noticed from up here that not one of those forsaken were trying to get into Nixon’s pack directly across from us.

They were targeting ours the Slasher pack.

“How was the city outnumbered?” Ava gasps when an explosion goes off down by the cafe on the main street.

There was no other way to describe it, and the Pack warriors were outnumbered.

Slashers Packs men were trying to stop them from getting in, but a few slipped through, and just like our men, they couldn’t hold them back, they just kept coming. It should be impossible that so many could go unnoticed, but when one of the sky-rise apartments across from us caught on fire, more screams rang out from the apartment building as Forsaken got inside, and I just hoped the roller shutters and the locked stairway door held.

The mind-link opens up, and I hear Zoe.

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” Is Casey alright ?”

“We are on the roof,” I answered while peering over my shoulder to look at the children, and she sighed before she sobbed through the link.

“And Marcus? Is he there yet? I am being blocked out. I can’t get a hold of anyone,” she asked, but I couldn’t lie to her either.

“Not yet, but Zoe, the city,” I don’t finish. The place looked like a battlefield. “As long as Casey is safe,” she says. “Are you safe?” I ask her.

“I’m in the basement with some of the younger workers. But Macey, she....”

“Macey, what? Zoe?” I asked, panicked.

“She heard the sirens when I opened the doors and bolted out. We tried to stop her, “Zoe says.

“She has no phone. We have no service in here, and”

“She has no pack link,” I finish for her. My heart was beating faster at her words. “We think she went to warn the rogues at the reserves and homeless shelter.

This side hasn’t been hit yet,” Zoe tells me. Yes, because they were all over here trying to access our pack and Slashers, while Nixon’s remained untouched. That wasn’t a coincidence.

The mind-link is stretched when I feel Valen force it open, and Zoe is shoved out.

“We are trying to get to you. You just need to hold tight a little longer,” he said, though pain radiated through the bond, and I knew he was hurt.

“What about Marcus? Zoe is trying to get a hold of him.”

“No idea. Everyone is blocking the pack link so we don’t become distracted. We... the mind-link cuts off abruptly only for Zoe to reopen it, having felt the connection from Valen override hers.

“Marcus?”

“They lost sight of each other. Marcus is fine, Zoe. Valen would have felt the tether break,” I tell her, though I had no idea if that would remain true.

I felt helpless as I watched our pack getting slaughtered on the streets below while I was holed up on a roof, unable to help them.

Tatum POV

Teeth, claws, blood, and fur. Everything was a blur as I tried to hold them back. I was screaming through the link for Valen to get here when a few slipped past me. Men called through the link that they were on the way. Yet as one fell, another replaced it.

They seemed to just keep coming, and I was taking a beating. The venom in my system was starting to make my muscles ache and lock. The only thing keeping me on my feet was adrenaline and knowing that Taylor, Valarian, and Casey were in that stairwell. I just hoped they got inside the building and weren't sitting ducks. My back leg is ripped into simultaneously as two attacked snarling.

I pivot and twist, nearly ripping my leg off in the process.

Yelps and snarling ripped from the stairwell, causing me to become distracted as I tried to double back only to be jumped on. His claws ripped through my fur, making my back arch, and his teeth were like a serrated knife as they tore into the back of my neck. The stairwell, the stairwell, I kept thinking, while trying to toss him off as more flooded into the stairs, escaping past me while I was being ripped to shreds.

My teeth sank into its front paw, and I felt the crunch as its bones broke under the pressure of my jaw, forcing him to release me long enough to fling him off. I turned, running for the stairwell, my vision blurring as I ran when forsaken were suddenly running back out of the stairwell. My heart jolted seeing the rabid creatures running when one dropped as a huge, molten-colored wolf tore into its neck.

And it took me a second to realize it was Claire. Yet she didn't look like a pack wolf but one of the forsaken. Her blood-red eyes were savage, and venom was oozing and dripping from her teeth. Panic coursed through me, knowing if she turned on me, I would have to kill Everly's mother when her head twisted in my direction. Her lips pull back as she drops her head, snarling and stalking towards me before she runs at me.

I snarled back when she lunged, only she missed, and I jumped aside, skidding on the slickened, blood-soaked floor, only to see her rip into a forsaken that must have been coming up behind me.

Four more rush through the barrier and I jump over her, jumping into the fray. She was a full-blown forsaken. However, she was fighting our side, not theirs, which gave her an advantage, as they kept recognizing her as their own. With the savage gleam and the way she fought, you could tell John trained her himself.

She was just as lethal, but with a vicious edge, she tore into them, locking her jaw each time and tearing them to shreds, not even flinching as they tore into her back. Relentlessly, she fought, saving my ass twice and I hers as we fought tail to tail, trying to hold them back.

My back leg was useless, and I was running on three, the other hanging behind me. "We're in the street," Valen called, and I couldn't reply. I was too focused on the wolves in front of me. We needed to try to push them back to the street. Claire was taking on three, but even she was on the losing end this time as I ripped one off her that was ripping into her flank, her jaws locked around another one's neck.

My paw swipes at the other, and we push them back and keep pushing them back up the ramp. Daylight broke as we kept forcing them further back when she let out a whimper as we made it out the front of the hotel. Pivoting, I ran towards her when a deafening howl ripped through the air as she swayed on her feet. Her throat is torn out, and her front legs buckle when a giant black and grey wolf starts ripping them off her, and another Forsaken tackles me.

I break the wolf's neck and turn my head to find it was John. The three dead, forsaken lying around him, and John now stood naked petting her wolf. Her chest rises and she wheezes as blood pools around her when her chest appears to deflate.

And the agonized howl that turned to a wail shook me to the core when I heard Everly's wailing scream ring out above as she felt her mother's link disintegrate. ⁸ Everyone stops at the noise, even the forsaken who are flooding into the street. Valen's wolf was huge and the one beside him equally big, and I recognized the wolf as the Slasher packs Alpha.

When Marcus's Grey wolf rushed past me toward the forsaken, his coat tainted red, and the chaos started again. John's angered roar made my fur stand on end, and he shifted. He erupted and barreled towards the forsaken with blind fury, ripping them apart as the bloodshed started again. Yet as an observer, I realized something. They were heading here, and they were running for the Alpha's homes, making this targeted and well thought out.

From what I heard, the rogue's side and Everly's hotel side of the City remained untouched by the information coming through the link. The carnage only happening on one side. Nixon had to be behind it. And he was casting the rogues as the ones starting it.

Chaos ensued as we battled, our men falling and the forsaken kept coming. Valen and the Slasher pack Alpha, even John and Kalen, were lethal beasts.

The four Alphas working together as they got right in the middle of the battle, huge towering beasts compared to the Forsaken. Not a speck of fur was left untainted, their coats dripping in blood, both theirs and the Forsaken. This is what made them Alpha's, pure lethal muscle and precision like no other. Despite their massive sizes, they were fast and ran through them like a bowling ball knocking down pins.

The street's gutters ran like rivers with blood, and it stained everything. They didn't stop, but neither did the Forsaken. These numbers should not exist! How could they outnumber us? Three packs were fighting, and we were still somehow outnumbered, or so we thought until the snarls shook windows.

The deafening force of pure rage reverberated around the street, everyone stopping to stare down the end of the road looking for the source of the rumbling noise when Macey appeared. My heart stopped as she ran from down the street straight at us with a huge bat in her hands. Fear coursed through me, and I ran towards her as the forsaken took off in her direction.

Only to start skidding across the ground as they tried to stop and double back when the Rogues tore up the street towards us. I stopped as she led her army of Rogues to the battle, and they were a sight to be seen.

Our men were given rest as they jumped into battle without hesitation. Saving those who shunned them, cast them out, and fought as one. Pack members and Rogues were fighting alongside

each other and painting the street red with the blood of the Forsaken and proving their innocence and their own desperate need to fight for our City. Teeth sank into my neck, and I was flung across the road.

My head smashed into the gutter, and I could hear screaming in the distance before I felt air blow the fur across my face as her bat connected with the wolf's skull with a thud. My eyes blurred as I opened them to see her bashing its skull into the earth with brute force.

Her clothes were stained with blood, her arm bleeding from where she had been bitten. But even covered in blood, she was beautiful as she fought. And I caught sight of Zoe's small white wolf protecting Marcus, who was trying to protect her when Macey screamed. My heart thumped and felt like it left my body as I tried to get to my feet, staggering as the venom took hold.

Only it wasn't a scream of pain but a war cry as she flung her bat at the wolf, ripping into Alpha John. She grunts when she is tackled from behind, only for Kalen to rip the wolf off her. I was delirious as I tried to find my footing and get to her, and I felt my surroundings flip and turn on their axis before I succumbed to the nothingness.

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Everly POV

There are no winners in a war. Either way, somebody loses, and even the winners lose.

They lose friends, family, humanity, and themselves. We won the battle, but no one wins the war because no one walks away

unscaffolded after witnessing such carnage, such loss, and it always ends in grief.

Grief shows you how valuable life is but also how cruel life is. It shows you the darkness of losing someone. Then it shows you the light in appreciating others more. You realize how precious life is but also how short life can be.

You learn how torturous it can be when you lose someone you couldn't imagine living without, but somehow you do.

Somehow, you're still breathing even when the pain of grief is so intense you believe it will kill you and sometimes wish it would, just so you don't have to know the pain of losing them.

Standing in this hall with hundreds of peering faces staring back at us, you could see their grief as if they wore it like armor, as if it was branded into their very being like a tattoo, screaming their anguish.

You could hear their gut wrenching screams as they realized the pain they were feeling wasn't hurt loved ones but broken bonds, and broken families, broken.

1 Nothing will kill your soul more than losing a loved one.

Nothing will break you down more than realizing you will never hold them again, never hear their voices, never see them.

1 We stood on a podium while Valen called out the names of loved ones, needing them to come forward to claim their dead sons, dead mates, and dead parents, and while trying to mask my own grief, I witnessed theirs, felt theirs with each broken tether.

How Valen called out the names, it was almost as if he was desensitized to death, expressionless.

Yet, through the bond, I knew he was barely holding it together as their screams and pain rippled through him like a stone tossed in the lake, that rippling tide on repeat, and I don't know how he bared it as he tried to keep the bond blocked, though those that sifted through I felt, felt him, felt them.

We won the battle, but we lost too. One hundred seventy-six lives were lost, Ninety-one bonds are broken, meaning a possible Ninety-one more lives to wither away until either they die slowly or their bond does.

Most of those deaths were men, F<}<g%AN she-wolves rarely lived without their mates.

Yet seeing my father sitting vacantly ahead, I knew he wished it killed him.

Valen called the names, and we heard their cries. It felt surreal, like a nightmare, a loop of horror that we were desperately trying to wake up from.

When he finished, we made our way out and met up with the council investigators; they were raiding my father's house when the attack started and they quick to jump in to help. Then while we cleaned up, they raided Nixon's pack.

A vast majority of the forsaken turned out to be his own people, unbonded males that apparently volunteered in the name of science, put up their hands for their own suicide, half his pack

gone, and for what? The other half was shocked, and Nixon used the attack as an escape from the city.

They were left abandoned. As each forsaken shifted back after their death, we were left with their true identities. He killed his own people.

The rest were the missing rogues. They were promised money, a cure, and a pack for their sacrifice. A sacrifice that ended in their deaths. Some thought it was worth the risk. We were shocked to
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onload I had find that his daughter was dead. He had apparently switched off her life support before fleeing the city, leaving behind his son in a padded room, which we learned held the cure in his veins. 2 His blood was the key needed to save them.

The investigators told us that Carter was shocked by his father's plans, that he had nothing to do with it or knew anything of it. That he, too, was a victim of his own father's cruelty.

A pack that was now left to him, Nixon had moved all his money and took every cent the pack had before running away like a coward leaving behind his mate, his son, and killing Carter's sister. I thought I knew evil, but 'Nixon proved he was more than evil.

There wasn't an accurate word to describe what he had done to this city, to his own people and his family. 2 Carter had handed his blood samples to the Slasher pack and Valen's pack for tontina Castor tunaaminoala Nivan had testing.

Carter was a miracle. Nixon had accomplished something. He accomplished finding a cure for the incurable. He was planning on infecting the world and then selling the cure to them. 2 Zoe was standing by the car with the kids and Kalen

. I touch Valen's arm, and he looks over at me. I nod toward Zoe, and he gives a swift nod before I make my way over to them. Valarian and the girls were sitting in the back of the car with the heating going as the night turned terribly cold, cold-like emptiness we all felt.

I look at them, checking on them before leaning against the hood next to Zoe, when my father wanders out looking rather lost. I was about to go to him when Kalen gripped my arm. "I'll go check on him," Kalen says, and I nod, grateful.

"Macey is still with Tatum. He has gone in for surgery to try to save his leg," Zoe whispers to me. "And Macey, she was bitten, wasn't she?"

Zoe shakes her head. "She isn't infected. She called me before her blood tests came back clear, however, Tatum is riddled with venom, and they aren't sure if he will make it," "Marcus?" she nods toward him, where he is walking over to Valen, who is still talking to the council investigators.

"He is fine, Beta blood. He is stronger than most, but so many are infected. Hopefully, Carter's blood really is the cure that's needed," Zoe says, and I swallowed. "Have you seen Ava?" I asked her. "I gave her your spare house keys," I nod.

Ava had said she wanted to stay with us the night. Dad too, was staying at our place, not wanting to go home without mum. We waited. Neither of us knew what to do, so I left it to Valen and the Slasher Pack Alpha.

They seemed to be in their element dealing with all the aftermath, and I didn't know the first thing about dealing with the werewolf council or what we do from here.

When they are finished talking, and everyone eventually leaves, Valen comes over with Marcus. He rubs his hands up my arms. His touch was warm, making me realize how cold my skin was.

“You should be in the car. It is too cold out here,” he murmurs. “Where did our fathers go?” “Your father is staying with mine.

Yours was apparently pretty drunk by the time dad finished talking to him,” “I could go for a bloody drink myself,” Marcus says, sounding exhausted as he nudged Valen.

Zoe shoots him a look, knowing I don't like Valen drinking, and he had been drinking recently over the last few weeks, and I didn't want him to fall back into old habits. “Come on, I should get you home,” Valen says, pulling me closer to use himself as a shield to protect me from the wind.

He moves to the back of Zoe's little car, where Valarian had fallen asleep with the girls. “Am I taking Taylor, or are you?” I asked Zoe.

“Marcus and I will take her,” Zoe answers, and I nod, grabbing Valarian’s blanket after Valen grabs him. I kissed both the girls who were sleeping soundly before following Valen to our car.

He puts Valarian in the back, and I place his blanket over him while clipping him in. We drove home in devastating silence.

I I was glad it was dark because I knew the roads were still painted in blood, a storm was brewing above, and I was hoping most of it was washed away by morning, Yet, we still had plenty of clean-up to do, plenty of people still missing because it was dark before we found the vast majority of bodies, Valen parked out in front of the hotel instead of underground. I stared at the front by the hedges where my mother’s body was before Valen gripped my hand, pulling my gaze away.

Those were the most harrowing hours of my life, sitting on the rooftop watching, trying to keep the kids distracted from witnessing the horror scene below us.

Trying not to scare them, and when it was all said and done, Valen’s desperation to check on us sent him to the roof.

Not ideal, considering there wasn’t a speck of skin that wasn’t covered in blood. I Luckily the kids were half asleep, so hopefully, they don’t remember seeing him, though I knew Valarian did.

He didn’t stop trembling until after Valen stepped out of the shower clean, and he realized it wasn’t his father’s blood, though he had remained silent ever since.

It was impossible to convince the kids to keep their eyes closed while we left the roof, but Marcus brought blankets up to check

over their heads while we carried them to the first accessible floor so they wouldn't see the forsaken my mother killed in the stairwell.

1 Getting home, I unlocked the door, and Valen immediately went to put Valarian in bed, though the sound of crying I could hear up the hall made me move to the guest bedroom I nudge the door open to find Ava in bed, huddled under the blankets; her body shook as she sobbed.

Quietly, I move toward the bed before climbing in behind her and wrapping my arms around her, hugging her as close as my belly would allow. I held her, and she cried, the sound breaking me into a million fractured pieces with sharp edges that pierced my soul.

“She’s gone,” Ava whispered. I nodded my head against her back and sniffled. “I know,” I whispered, not knowing what else to say. I couldn't take her pain; it was mine, too, though I wished I could stop her from feeling it.

She cried herself to sleep, and I held her until then. Slipping out of bed, I moved toward my room. Pushing the door open, I find Valarian in our bed, Valen wrapped around him. I slip my pajamas on, and Valen lifts his head. “He came in about 20 minutes ago,” he whispers.

I nodded my head before quickly slipping into bed on Valerian's other side. Valen drapes his arm across both of us, his hand rubbing the side of my belly. “I was worried you would try fighting,” Valen murmurs, propping his head upon his hand to look at me. I shake my head and place my hand over his on my belly and lean forward, kissing Valarian's head.

“No, I wanted to, but it wasn’t worth the risk, and I would have been no help anyway; I was where I needed to be and where mum wanted me to be, and that was

safe with Val,” I tell him.