



Chapter 0535

They both look at me with concern and I think they are going to fight me pushing this. I know it's going to be hard, but when has anything I have ever done not been hard? Never. Obviously, I was designed more like a cat than a dog and we are going to use all nine of my lives before this is over.

Somehow I think they are having a private conversation, but I didn't think witches could mindlink. Maybe they can, now that they are very clearly mated to werewolves.

"We can help you with some grounding, as well as your young men. We can be ready in an hour to take you to the Belladonna, if you are sure." Gentry asks. She's never really asked me if I wanted to do anything. That should be a red flag, but it's not.

I nod. "Bring stuff for the hemlock too." Her and Elena's eyes go wide. "I won't force anything, but if I can handle it I want to try. If I do not pass out, we will get these done. We need to prep for a fight and no one can focus with this sh*t hanging over us. I want control of my pack back. We don't know if Mike is on his own. Maybe he's a distraction for the Rogue King, we need to be ready for both of them. Let me do this."

They both nod again. "Go eat, and I mean really eat. You will need your strength. Give us some time and we will gather

what we need and come gather you when we are ready.” Gentry looks over my shoulder. “She does not leave this packhouse. She needs food and water and rest, but so do you three if we are going to make you a part of the conduit.”

“Yes ma’am.” All three say in the creepy twin speak. When did Oliver pick that up? 3

We all parted ways and the guys were true to their word to Gentry. We sat, we ate and they would not let me do anything. But no one made me go upstairs and try to sleep, so I guess that’s a win.

Conversation was almost nonexistent as we all sat outside looking at our forever fire until Lil sat forward.

“What are they doing with the magic? I mean I know we are breaking the evil Kaley-b*tch spell, but there is still magic around the pack, right? What are they doing exactly? Do you know Midge?”

“I have an idea, but it’s above my training to be able to give you a full tutorial. They are using me and basically the guys to take the spell and shift it into a protection spell. The same as the way Mike’s works, but less of a life detriment. We are all a part of it so someone would literally have to kill off every single person around the spell circle in order to break it and even then as long as our DNA is alive in someone somewhere the spell will be in effect. It will not forcibly bind anyone else to it. This is our burden to bear.”

“Oh damn. You really thought this through didn't you?”

“Yes and no. I can't take all credit, just the shift of the binding. We are all tied to this pack in one way or another, it made the most sense.”

“Wait? Does that mean I'm in your pack now? What about Wyatt and Nathaniel? They haven't been in the circle thing.”

“They have been our sentinels during the spell, they are tied too.”

“So much for having a choice when I was done with my time in the Elites.” She laughs at me.

“Like you were going to go anywhere else. How's your arm, by the way? Still itching?” 4

“Yeah, but it comes and goes. I'm not due to lose it until the end of this summer, so maybe this is normal?” She raises an eyebrow. “What am I saying? I'm teamed up with you, of course it isn't normal.” She smacks herself in the forehead and we all laugh. 4

“You aren't wrong.” Sierra laughs and leans over to hug me. The guys have been trying, almost successfully, to give us space.

I think the mated ones can sense danger and are having a hard time being too far from their mates. The rest as a group are and have always been protective so they are here standing watch over all of us.

"It's time." Gentry's deep voice is both calming and authoritative all at once.

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Chapter 0536

We load up, this has become second nature already, and head to the Belladonna patch in the Northeast corner of the island. The forest here is so lush and green. I don't normally run this part of the patrol. We don't tend to get a lot of ocean based attacks so we patrol here, but it is light. I instantly love it here though. The sun is shining through the trees and I can see the individual rays that are sliced by the branches. As I look out the window I see a clearing, similar to the first two. The Belladonna is another beautiful plant With deep indigo blue purple flowers that look like little bells. I haven't been able to wrap my mind around such beautiful things causing so much pain and sorrow. But I guess it isn't the plants, it's the casters taking the plants abilities and bending them to evil tendencies.

We all walk out knowing our positions by now. This time Oliver is to my left, Cam is on my right and Dakota is behind me. It's so funny how they can interchange their rolls in this and I don't feel uncomfortable at all. Gentry is talking, but I don't listen. I feel a little bad for that, but I am already locked in on the magic. The dark blue is like paint floating in water. There is no shimmer to it at all, but it is beautiful all the same. I have been forced into my worst memories and my worst fear. I wonder what I will endure today? I think knowing that it's going to attack me personally helps. I won't be blindsided necessarily. I just never know what it is

going to do. 2

The chanting begins and the magic swirls. This is thicker than the last two and more sluggish to move, but it does, reluctantly. I watch the magic and see the fuzzy images start to form in front of me this time. I am watching as if they were on TV in front of me not consuming my whole focus.

The blue haze floats along the ground and I see fighting. Wolves and humans alike are fighting everywhere. Some faces I recognize, but others I don't and yet feel a pull to protect them. I want to save all of these people from the fight they are being forced into. No one wants to be here, I can feel it. I see a man, absolute fear in his eyes as he attacks a wolf twice his size. They battle for mere moments before the wolf rips out his throat. Another woman is fighting a faceless warrior for her life. He sends a bone cracking punch to her face and she hits the ground hard and does not move again. I am stuck, powerless to help any of them. I am watching all of these people die for someone else's self centered cause. I can feel the hot tears running out of my eyes, but I can't look away. They all deserve to be seen if I can't help them. I will watch each one of them fall and carry that memory with me forever. The scene shifts and what I see stops my heart. Sierra on the ground, eyes open, not moving. Sam, not two steps away from here with the same look. Lil, Wyatt, Nathaniel, Mateo, Jena all in heaps on the ground. I don't know if any of them are alive. A hulking figure stalks towards me. I can't see his face

under a large hood pulled down to his nose, but I know it's the Rogue King, that's the only person who could bring this kind of destruction. His walk is labored and it takes me way too long to figure out why.

He is dragging something behind him, making the walk slow and fumbling. I am ready to fight, there is no way I am getting out of this without one. When he stops, he drops three ropes at my feet. No words are spoken, but I don't need them. My guys are bound at the wrists, arms over their heads, bleeding from more points than I can count. Oliver's eyes are open and I let out a wail. He can't be... He's always just been there and been solid and dependable...No. Cam's eyes are closed, but his neck is at an odd angle. I want to sink to my knees, but I can't even do that, my body is frozen. Dakota looks like someone dragged their claws over his body over and over again. Who would do something like that?

I let out a yell of pain. I can feel my body heating up and I hear a low rumble of laughter. "It's just a matter of time, my special girl, then you will be mine. Right where you were meant to be. And as you can see, no one can stop me."



Chapter 0537

I blink and the figure is gone, but the people on the ground remain surrounded by the velvety dark blue ink swirling just off the ground unchanging, motionless.

"I got you Smalls."

"Take a deep breath Bitty."

"Come on Tiny, some back to us." 1

I hear the words, but I can't believe them. I'm still staring at their unmoving forms. It's their voices in my head because I want to hear them so badly. I can feel pressure on my arms, but I can't look down. Why can't I move? This isn't right. Something is off. I focus back on my three guys lying on the ground, but their voices are all around me.

"That's it, blink, look at us, focus, Tiny."

"We're right here." I feel hands on my cheeks, but no one is there. What is happening? Is the Rogue King using magic to disorient me? Magic. Wait, what was I doing before this? Magic, Gentry and Elena were doing magic. I'm part of the spell. It's not real. But, if it isn't real why can't I look away? I can't turn off the vision. I try to pull away.

"No, Bitty. Stay here. Don't move. Breathe. Listen."

"Tiny, let me have some of the fear. Let us help you."

Dakota is talking to me, but he can't be. He's in front of me shredded and not moving. "I'm here, let me help." I feel arms tighten around my waist and my back is flush with a broad taught chest. I take a breath in. Cinnamon. I smell Dakota right behind me. "That's it, Smalls. Let us help."

I lean back, I hope my instincts are right. This whole thing is so strange I have two realities going on. The one I can see and the one I can hear and I can't make the two match up.

"We're still here Bitty. Think and look, control it. See past the illusion."

"I can't" It's all I can whisper.

"Yes, you can, Tiny. We're here, feel it." I can feel large fingers lacing with mine and then squeezing tight, almost painfully.

"What is taking so long?" Someone behind me growls in question.

"This one seems to have more layers, multi purpose. This is one being used to control you boys as well as whatever illusions have been keeping everyone under control. There is a lot to unpack. Skylar, I need you to fight this with us. Wherever you see, whatever is causing you pain right now, look through it, see through the illusion. Find the truth. This one is for you to break."

So, no pressure or anything. Why can't I just have regular lessons from regular instructors? Why is everything thrown

at me and learn as you go? I can't seem to open my mouth to make words come out. She said see through the illusion. I can hear Oliver and Cam talking to me. I know Dakota is behind me, his arms around me. So he can't be the bloody mess in front of me. I focus on that. I tilt my head back. He's still there, his chest is supporting my head. His heartbeat is fast though. Does he see what I see? Or maybe his version of his loved ones dying? I breathe deep, warm, spicy Cinnamon. I squeeze my right hand still laced with Cam's. My left is engulfed by Oliver's. I flex those fingers too. Another deep breath, Honey and Citrus join the mix. They are here with me not on the ground. I can see the navy mist start to thin. I see Sierra and Sam, then Lil and Jena and Mateo. All my friends are looking at me with varying degrees of worry. The vision tries to pull me back in and it hurts, like ice burning my skin it prickles everywhere and I struggle to hold my focus, but if this is on me and I want to end this I have to fight.

I take a deep breath and let the scents around me solidify my strength. I think about containing the evil magic that has been forced onto these beautiful plants. I imagine a glass bubble and siphon the navy mist inside where it can't harm anyone else. My breathing is labored and I am sweating now, but it is working. The visualization is helping me clear my vision. The whole clearing is in my view now. One more surge of ice shoots down my spine, through my heels and into the ground and then my body collapses.

"Damn, Smalls." Dakota picks me up, but for the first time

since we started doing this, I am awake.

"Great work Little One. You are tired and I am sure the Hemlock will be much of the same. Do you still want to try?" Gentry is close to me now. When did she walk over here?

"F*ck no, she's not trying another one." Cam sounds appalled. "Look at her, she can't even stand."

"I am looking at her, Alpha. This is the first time she has come out of the spell conscious and she dispelled this one herself. This is her decision to make, not yours or mine and I will respect either choice as will you."

"We have to."

"Bitty are you sure? That one was rough."

"But not as rough as the first two and I'm starting to figure out the magic. We only have a few more days and these have to go before we can deal with the fire back at the pack house. I'm okay, I will probably pass out and need you three to carry me home and snuggle with me, but if we all expect it then we can deal with it." I touch his cheek with my palm and he leans into it. I don't totally understand this shift in our relationship, but I'm just going to go with it.

"You're always going to give her what she wants aren't you?" Cam asks from next to me and I smile a little.

Oliver looks at me and winks. "Probably." 1

Cam growls again as Dakota silently turns and walks back to the truck. We don't get in the front seat though. He somehow maneuvers into the backseat without putting me down. Cam slides in near my head and Oliver slides in, laying my feet in his lap. Sierra and Sam jump in the front seats, like this is totally normal.

"Sleep Smalls, we have about an hour to get to the next spot." I nod my head and lay back onto Cam's lap.

I roll on my side so I am facing his stomach and let his warmth and scent surround me. He starts to run his fingers lightly through my hair. Dakota's warm hand slides under my shirt and rubs circles into my back and Oliver has my legs tucked up into him. With their warmth and scents and the gentle sway of the truck, I am out in no time.

When they wake me up, I feel completely refreshed. Without words we all step out of the truck and start the process over. This time Cam is behind me, Oliver to my right and Dakota to my left.

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