

Chapter 141

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I stared at Carter's body for god knows how long before I came back to my senses. I glanced around the room, and it suddenly looked a lot different. It was depressing before, but now it was as cold and dead as I felt inside.

My nose still hadn't stopped bleeding, and vertigo washed over me as I stood up. I stagger, moving toward the bag Carter had brought back with him. Undoing the zip, I rummage through it, looking for the key before remembering it was around his neck, and I glanced at his body tucked in bed as if he was sleeping.

Hesitantly, I move toward him before pulling the blanket back. My hand shakes as I reach forward, grab the chain around his neck, and yank it. The gold chain snaps, and I quickly shove the blanket back up to cover him. Tears spill over, and I wipe my eyes, trying to clear them when my vision turns red. I blink, trying to clear them and rub at them furiously, to see my hands come back bloody, making me gape at them.

I knew it would be harmful to kill a mate, yet I didn't consider myself dying beside him. I didn't want to die here. I wanted to see my little girl one last time, to at least tell her I love her, to see her face one last time. However, looking at my hands, I didn't want her to remember me this way if this was going to be my future, my very short future.

I choke back a sob and undo the chain around my ankle. When a crack of thunder makes the world seem like its ending as the cabin rattles and the floor shakes with its violent tremor. It was now pouring down with rain, and I knew I would be walking blindly out there, especially since I wasn't sure if I could shift.

Something felt like it was rotting me from the inside out. As if my soul was rotting as quickly as my body. I felt sickly, and I knew this was the consequence of me killing my mate. Yet I had to try. I may not be able to go home and see Taylor, but I needed to get somewhere my body could be found. I didn't want her growing up, not knowing if I abandoned her or if I was dead. No, I would at least give her a body to bury.

Glancing at Carter, so much anger boiled within me. "I hate you!" I screamed at him before collapsing to the ground.

I punched the ground, my fist slamming into the shitty wood as I screamed my anguish, frustration, C; \_tJiXS pain. My knuckles bleed as they split, and I clutch my hair, ripping at it. I wanted to hurt something, anything, myself, for feeling so weak.

I hated him, hated him. The man took everything from me. Everything and everyone he touched was destroyed. He destroyed Zoe. He destroyed me. But I hated him most, knowing he had just destroyed my baby because she would have to grow up without the one person who loved her most.

I knew Everly and Zoe would look after her, and I knew they wouldn't stop looking until they found what was left of me but no would love her the way I do. I may not be able to raise her, but they would for me.

I choked on a sob, cursing at how fucked up this was. How cruel life was that I not only lost a mate but my daughter too. That saying, 'you don't know what you have until you lose it,' seemed to laugh at me. Because I never pictured finding my mate and losing him.

Never pictured having my daughter and not being able to raise her. Never thought I would die without watching her become the woman she is destined to be.

I would have been content to be mateless as long as I served my purpose, to see her through to adulthood when she didn't need me anymore.

That was my life's purpose, to raise my baby, and now the only such purpose I had left was to get to a road so my body could be found, so she had something to bury. I could not die peacefully, knowing she would wonder if I left her, abandoned her.

When I am done destroying myself, I look at the fistfuls of hair and my bloody fists.

Numbness spreads over me, cold and uncaring, as I inhale a shaky breath. The air thickens with the storm as it pelts the tin roof. All my fight was gone, it left, and I was as dead as the bond I shared with him.

Yet deep down, I knew I had to move, I needed to get up. Dragging myself to my feet, I stare at the door, swallowing down my sadness as I take a step toward it when it bursts open making me jump.

I stared at the darkness outside before a low, deep growl vibrated throughout the cabin as an enormous wolf I recognized not only by scent but by his fur to be John. His paws made the floorboards creak as he stepped inside, and my legs gave out from under me, realizing I wouldn't have to die alone. Footsteps on the stairs outside reach my ears when John spots me.

“He’s dead,” I tell him. His body relaxes, and Kalen steps in behind him, pushing the door open more, and John shifts back. I turn my gaze away, knowing he is naked. John moves toward the bed, and I hear the blanket get yanked back.

“That he is.” John states, and I look at Kalen, who nods at John’s words. “Good. Now, what are you doing on the floor?” Kalen asks, and I blink at him.

“Dying!” I laugh, rolling my eyes at him. Great, now I was numb. I could joke about my own death.

“Nonsense, that’s what death looks like,” Kalen says as he points to Carter.

“Is that an antler?” John asks, holding up the bloody piece of bone. Kalen shakes his head at John before turning his attention back to me.

“Well, time to clean this mess up,” Kalen says, moving toward me, and I snort. He crouches in front of me.

“I killed my mate,” I tell him.

“So did I,” Kalen whispers, but I shake my head.

“Maybe not the same way, but I killed my Vai. You know it, and I know it. What you did was brave. What I did was cowardly,” Kalen tells me, gripping my face in his hands.

“Now get up. You have a little girl to get home to. And I got grandbabies to meet,” Kalen says.

“I can’t go back like this. I won’t force Taylor to watch me die. She will not remember me this way,” I tell him.

“No. Taylor won’t have to remember you, Macey because you are not dying. Now get up!” John says, and I look over at him to see he had stolen a pair of Carter’s shorts from the bag and slipped them on.

“What about him? Even if I miraculously survive, I killed someone in cold blood. He was no threat to me,” I tell them.

“Sadly, Carter won’t be missed,” Kalen says, and to me that was truly sad because despite everything I knew he was just broken and twisted, yet he wasn’t a complete monster, I had seen parts of him that proved that.

“Yeah, but the courts and council won’t see it that way,” I tell them before coughing.

“If that’s the case, you never killed him. Just like you didn’t kill Preston, I did.” Kalen states, and I look at him before I heave.

Coughing, my throat felt extremely itchy. Blood splatters the floor and covers Kalen’s already drenched shirt. John steps forward as I choke on my blood. When I stopped

coughing, I knew it was pointless to worry because I would be dead long before I got home.

“Spose it doesn’t matter,” I tell them, holding up my hand, drenched in my blood. Kalen looks at John, who nods, his eyes turn glassy, and he clears his throat before shaking his head. John stalks toward me almost angrily as he rips me to my feet.

“You are not dying on us! So choose. Me or Kalen? Choose because I am not going home without you!” John growls.

I look between them when Kalen grabs a makeshift chair and John shoves me down in it.

“You will choose, Macey. Neither one of us wants the job of telling your daughter their mother is dead when we could have saved you,” Kalen says.

I swallowed, glancing between them and saying nothing. If I choose one, either way, I would be Valen’s new stepmother or Everly’s. That thought disgusted me. I loved these two old fossils, but not in that sense, and after feeling the bond with Carter, I knew what marking one of them would make me feel towards them, i

It was inevitable and so gross! Yet I also had no choice. This was my chance to go home to my baby.

“Fine, paper, scissors, rock?” Kalen says, turning to John. “You won’t choose. We’ll choose for you,” John adds. I look at my dead mate on the bed, his body cold, and the two men that were old enough to be my damn father.

I knew Valen or Everly would forgive me for marking one of their dads, yet it felt wrong. The one person I wanted as a mate I couldn’t have, and my true mate, was dead because I killed him.

Panic courses through me as I watch them repeatedly tie, both of them becoming frustrated as I watch them shake their fists and both go scissors.

“This is ridiculous,” I mutter at the stupid situation I was stuck in. Of course, not only did the moon goddess give me a shitty mate, but she made two old guys be the ones to find me and was now forcing me to choose between them to save my life.

Kalen curses when they both choose paper this time. “You’re just going to have to choose, Macey. John or me? Which one is marking you?” Kalen says as they look at me expectantly, and my lips part as I glance between them.

“So, who’s it going to be?” John asks.

“Me!” comes a voice I never thought I would hear again. Kalen and John turn toward the door where the voice came from and so do I, to see Tatum walk in. He was drenched and naked, and I had no idea how he got here, but there he was and I was in disbelief. 4

“And you better say yes because neither of their dusty old lips are touching my mate!” Tatum says, stepping into the cabin. Emotion chokes me and makes me speechless, and my body was moving toward him long before my brain comprehended it. I crash into him, my arms wrapping around his neck and my legs around his waist. Tatum stumbles back, clutching me, his fingers tangling in my hair as he grips me like I was his life jacket. “I’m here now. I’m so sorry,” Tatum whispers, kissing my face before tugging my head back, but I couldn’t even form words. Stunned, he was here.

“I choose you, Macey. You are far more than I deserve, but I won’t let them mark you,” Tatum whispers, his eyes going to my neck and Carter’s mark on it. He glances at the bed where Carter’s body laid. He swallows and turns back to face me.

Tatum sweeps my hair over my shoulder that is caked in blood and god knows what else before he snarls and sinks his teeth into my neck. Pain ripples through me as his teeth slice through my flesh, tearing Carter’s mark to pieces and forcing his in its place.

The tingles start out slow as I feel the bond start sewing its way through me, ridding Carter’s essence and replacing it with his. Burning like acid, the pain was excruciating bliss as he sank them deeper, his canines hitting bone, and I felt his saliva move through my veins, feel his soul binding itself to mine and forcing mine to stay.

A sob escapes me, and tears slip down my face as I turn my face into his neck, his bond strengthening mine and allowing my canines to extend. Not an ounce of hesitation ran through me as I sank them into his neck, and fireworks exploded in my head.

Tingles made my skin vibrate as our souls entwined and bled into each other as the bond snapped into place.

Tatum gasps, pulling his teeth from my neck, and he runs his tongue along his mark, sealing it just as I pull my teeth from his. He presses his forehead against mine.

“Let’s go home,” he whispers, and I nod. Immense relief slivers through every atom in my body. I could go home. And I could go home to Taylor with the man I love as my mate. 14