

Chapter Three

Ayla

I woke with a groan, as my entire body pulsed with a fury as I tried to move. Before my eyes were open, I was trying to remember what happened and why I was lying on something comfortable and not on the ground, where I was lying before. I was also warm, which if I was still outside, I wouldn't be. I could hear Bluey snoring beside me as I tried to open my eyes.

As soon as the light hit me, my head started pounding, and I felt like I was going to throw up. Trying to breathe through the pain, I found that my abdomen hurt like a b****h. Each deep breath I took was agonizing. I tried to calm my breathing as I turned my head to see Bluey. She was resting her head on the pillow beside me. My arm felt heavy as I reached it out to touch her. I was so thankful that she was alive.

Closing my eyes, I couldn't ght the exhaustion. Bluey was safe, and that was all that mattered right now. Resting my hand on her belly, I must have fallen back asleep.

I was awakened by a loud bang and people shouting. Instantly on alert, Bluey sat up beside me and let out a growl. f**k, where the hell was I? Did the men from the woods take me? But Bluey is still alive. Who the hell was out there?

Looking around the room, I found I was in a bedroom. The walls and ceiling look like a log cabin. Did someone nd me and take me back to their home in the woods?

Sitting up with a groan, I wrapped an arm around my waist to help me try to get off the bed. Pulling back the blanket, I found I was dressed in sweatpants. I was still in my bra and I had bandages wrapped around my torso. There was a zipper hoodie on the chair by the window. I moved off the bed, unable to stand to my full height as I struggled to walk over to the chair.

The shouting continued, and I was scared that whoever it was would storm into the room and hurt me. Bluey was growling at the door as I tried to pull the hoodie on. My abdomen throbbled, but I could only focus on the screaming and shouting.

As soon as I opened the door, Bluey took off, and I struggled behind her, trying to catch her. I didn't know who or what we were running into. She ran down the stairs and I hobbled, one hand gripping the railing and one arm wrapped around my waist.

I stopped as soon as what looked like a living room came into view. Bluey was barking and growling at the man I never thought I'd ever see again.

"Dad?" I whispered, stopping on the stairs.

"Bluey, it's okay girl, calm down." I heard Jim say, but I couldn't take my eyes off the man that abandoned me.

"My dear, my name is Elizabeth. My son found you. How are you feeling?" a woman asked me. She was standing at the bottom of the stairs.

Taking my eyes off my father, I looked at the woman. She had dark blonde hair with kind blue eyes that were watching me with concern. She was beautiful, and I walked down the stairs towards her.

"Son?" I asked her. She pointed over to where Jim was standing. Mr. Dreamy Blue eyes was standing beside him, now dressed.

"You." I breathed out. Looking around the room, I didn't see the others that I saw up on the mountain.

Elizabeth, touching my forearm, pulled my attention from the gorgeous stranger and back to what was happening around me. I was so confused about how my father could be here and with Jim.

"Ayla, you will get in your vehicle and you will never come back to these mountains." My father demanded.

"Son," Jim said.

"Son?" I gasped out, looking between them. Jim looks like an older version of my father and I nally gured out why he looked so familiar to me.

"Jim's my grandfather." I said out loud to myself.

"You are not my child and you will get the hell out of here and never come back." He growled out. Tears swelled in my eyes at the man I knew never loved me, but him saying those words out loud broke my heart. His family was here, and he didn't want me around them. Proving that I was the mistake, I always knew I was.

The front door was thrown open and an older woman rushed in and over to Jim.

"Where is she?" She breathed out, panicked. My father let out a growl, and I whimpered, now terrified of the man in front of me.

Mr. Dreamy blue eyes moved across the room and was now standing between me and my father. I didn't realize I was shaking until Elizabeth wrapped an arm around my shoulders. I couldn't hear them talking, but it was like they were having a silent conversation.

"Fine. But she will be gone tomorrow and keep her away from the pack house." My father growled out before he left, slamming the door behind him. Watching my father leave, I felt like I was fteen again. He left after my mother's funeral and that was the last time I ever saw him.

"Jim," I heard the older woman say.

"I should go." I breathed out. Moving away from Elizabeth, I stumbled, but Mr. Dreamy blue eyes caught me. As he tried to steady me on my feet, he wrapped his hands around my waist, causing me to hiss out in pain.

"s**t, sorry," he said as I tried to breathe through the pain. Elizabeth came over, grabbing my shoulders, and he let go.

"Ayla, sweetie," the older woman said. She approached me with tears in her eyes. She grabbed my cheeks, staring into my eyes.

"Jim, she looks so much like her mother." She cried, wrapping her arms around my shoulders, pulling me into a hug. The last person who hugged me like this was my mother the morning before she died.

Unable to hold back my tears, I hugged this stranger tightly as I cried on her shoulder. When I heard the door click, I pulled away, wiping my tears away on my sleeves. Looking around the room, Elizabeth and the woman I was hugging were the only ones still here.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cry on your shoulder." I sniffed, embarrassed about what had just happened.

"Ayla, my name is Claire. I'm Jim's mate." The older woman introduced herself, leading me over to the kitchen table. Mate? That's a weird way to say wife.

"You're my grandmother?" I asked her, taking a seat. Claire sat across from me and Elizabeth busied herself in the kitchen.

I held my torso with one hand and rested my head on my other hand, resting my elbow on the table. My entire body ached and my world was spinning. How the hell can my father be here? And my grandparents?

"Are you okay, my dear?" Elizabeth asked, pulling me from my thoughts. She was now sitting beside me with a cup of tea.

"I don't know." I stuttered out.

"Ayla, you must be really overwhelmed. Do you have questions for us?" Claire asked me. I should have a million questions for them, but I could only think of one I wanted the answer to.

"The guy who found me. Where did he go?" Both of them shared a look before Elizabeth answered.

"He was called away, but should be back soon."

"I just wanted to thank him before I leave. He didn't have to help me. I'll leave him my number." I told them.

"Ayla, you are welcome to stay," Claire said.

"No, I'm not. You heard my father. I'm not welcome here. It's best for everyone if I just leave," I told her.

"But we just found you." She said with tears in her eyes.

"He didn't want me to nd you. I didn't realize Jim was his father. I just needed to take some photos." I said, trying to stand up from my seat at the table. Hissing, my breathing became laboured as I tried to breathe through the pain.

"My dear, you are in no position to leave. How are you going to drive in your condition?" Elizabeth asked me, standing up to help me.

"I'll gure it out. Do you know where my phone and pack are?" I asked her and she sighed.

"It's over by the door."

Stumbling, I made it over to the door to nd my pack was there. I was trying to kneel and go through it when Bluey came over to me and licked my cheek. She had found a comfortable spot on the couch.

"I know, girl. I'm trying to get us home." I told her, patting her head. Leaning against my pack, I felt exhausted as I closed my eyes and breathed through the pain.

Jumping from a loud bang, I hadn't realized I had fallen asleep sitting against my pack. Bluey was lying beside me as I rubbed my eyes. I didn't expect Mr. Dreamy blue eyes to be kneeling down in front of me.

"Are you okay?" He asked me. I nodded, unable to speak. There was something about him I couldn't put my nger on. Looking into his eyes, I felt like he was looking into my soul. The room and everyone in it faded away as I watched the stranger in front of me.

"I fucken hate your friends, Nate. I might actually kill Mitch." A woman growled out, slamming the front door as she stormed into the house. His name must be Nate.

"Ruby, we have company." He said, his eyes never leaving mine.

"Does the alpha know?" She said, and that pulled my attention from Nate to the woman named Ruby.

"Alpha as in wolves?" I asked her, confused.

"Are you hungry?" Nate asked me, changing the subject. I groaned as I tried to sit up, panting from the pain.

"I should get cleaned up and then head home." I told him, trying to go through my bag. Finding my phone, I had a ton of missed calls and texts.

"I'd like you to stay," Nate said, and I sighed, looking at him. He was still kneeling down in front of me.

"My father was pretty clear," I told him.

"Father?" Ruby yelled out from the kitchen. Nate cleared his throat as I looked in the kitchen's direction.

Everyone was quiet as I checked my phone. I had a bunch of messages from Jordan. And as much as I didn't want to deal with him. I knew I was going to have to break things off with him. Before I could read any of his messages, my phone rang in my hand. My friend Xander was calling me. Instantly, my stomach twisted with nerves. Xander knew I was away this weekend, so this must be important.

"I have to take this." I said out loud, not looking up from my screen as I answered my phone.

"Hello?"

"Ayla, thank god you're alright. Where are you?" Xander rushed out.

"I'm still out trying to get the photo I need. What's wrong?" now concerned about what he was getting at.

"Ayla, I'm at the re station. I was just getting off duty when a call came in. Your neighbour's house caught re. I'm heading there with the re chief now."

"What?" I exclaimed, reaching for my mom's necklace.

"f**k, my necklace." I gasped.

"You don't have it?" Xander asked me.

"No, I took it off. I didn't want to lose it in the mountains." I told him, panicked.

"We will be on the scene in a few minutes. I'll try to nd it." Xander told me.

"Thank you, Xander. I'm leaving now. I'll be there in a few hours." Before I hung up, I told him.

I forgot the pain in my torso as I tried to wrap my mind around the fact everything I had worked so hard for could be going up in flames, literally. And I was cursing myself for leaving my mom's necklace behind. Standing up, I was trying to get my pack organized.

"Is everything okay?" Nate asked me, causing me to jump. He was now standing beside me.

"I need to head home now," I told him.

"Bluey," I called out, dragging my pack to the door.

"Did something happen?" Nate rushed out, helping me with my pack.

"Yes, and I have to leave. Where are my keys?" I rushed out.

"They are in your SUV, its parked out front." He told me.

"Thank you," I breathed out, opening the front door. Bluey was beside me, and Nate was carrying my pack as I walked out onto the porch. The sky was cloudy, and it looked like we could get some rain.

"Is this her?" I heard a woman say, and then I heard a loud growl. Ignoring everyone, I took my pack from Nate. Walking down the stairs, I walked over to my SUV. I didn't have time for this. I still had a two-hour drive back into the city. And I felt like I was going to throw up. My SUV was unlocked when I tried to open the back hatch.

"Good, you're leaving." My father growled out behind me. With all the emotions I had ever felt towards the man that was supposed to be, my father bubbled to the surface as I slammed the hatch closed.

"Why the f**k do you hate me so much?" I screamed, turning to face him. Nate was standing nearby and a few others were on the porch. There was also a very beautiful woman standing near my father.

"You were a mistake," he sneered.

"Then you wrap it up. You don't blame the child that never asked to be here." I yelled out. He just glared at me, but I wasn't done.

"What the f**k could I have done to you to warrant that kind of abuse I suffered after mom died? I get it, you hate me and I was a mistake, but I'm still blood. Your blood and you just left me. You left me in the hands of those monsters." I screamed, tears now running down my face. The clouds opened, and the rain came pouring down.

"Atlas, what is she talking about?" the woman asked him, grabbing his arm.

"It doesn't matter." I said, shaking my head.

"Bluey, let's go." I called out, moving to the driver's side of my vehicle. Opening the door, Bluey jumped in and moved over to the passenger seat. Before I climbed in, I turned back to look at Nate.

"Thank you for nding me." I told him.

Hopping in, the rain drenched me. I started my vehicle before I plugged in my phone, pulling up the map app. Typing in my address, the app mapped out how to get home from here. When I was ready, I pulled out of the driveway, relieved to be putting some distance between me and my father. But the relief was instantly replaced with dread as I thought about Nate. Shaking my head, I focused on the road, as the rain came down even harder than before.

About an hour into my drive home, my phone rang through the speakers. Looking at the screen, Jordan's name popped up. Sighing, I answered.

"Jordan?"

"Ayla, where have you been? I've been worried." He rushed out.

"You knew where I was, Jordan." I told him and he sighed.

"Baby, don't be angry. I'm sorry, okay." he said, sounding sympathetic.

"Jordan, I can't do this anymore." I told him.

"Can't do what?" He rushed out.

"This, us. I can't do this."

"Ayla, if this is about this weekend, I'm sorry," he said, and I sighed.

"It's more than that, Jordan. It's been almost a year and you have never said you love me. We'd go out and have fun, but it was never serious. And I'm looking for more than just a good time." I told him.

"So that's it then?" He growled out.

"That is Jordan. I wish you all the best." I told him, before ending the call.

Scratching Bluey's ear, I let out a sigh as I tried to calm my racing heart. I pray I can nd my mom's necklace and the re didn't destroy it. I only had a few things from my mother. The rest was in a reproof lock box, but the necklace I wore all the time unless I was hiking. I didn't want to lose it.

Bluey let out a sigh beside me, and I looked down at her. She was curled up and resting her head on the middle console.

"I know, girl. I'm driving as fast as I can." I told her, patting her head.

Finally, pulling up as close as I could to my house. My stomach was in knots as I watched the ames that had engulfed my home. Tears fell down my cheeks as I watched everything I had worked so hard for burn to the ground.

"Bluey, what are we going to do now?"