

## 26-The Locket

Ari's POV

Everyone looks at my parents and are confused.

Dove has a smirk on her face that I can't understand fully.

Juliet - I'm not liking where this is headed.

"So is Ariella," Finley breaks the silence.

Mom and Dad share a look and Caleb drops his fork.

Juliet - Big Brother Mode Activated!

"You two cannot be serious," Caleb grabs the locket from Dad and looks at the photo. "Finch is clearly gifted with beautiful mates. Both of his mates have been other worldly beautiful."

Juliet - Big Brother Mode in full swing.

My parents give me a tight smile.

"Of course, Ariella is beautiful," Mom swallows as if the words caught in her throat.

"Wait," Finley interjects. "You two don't think your own daughter is beautiful?"

"Clearly, you agree, since you rejected her," Dad

snaps.

Juliet- The steak knife to your left would fit perfectly in his eye socket, just FYI.

“That had nothing to do with her looks,” Finley stands up. “In fact, I wasn’t all that keen on the rejection part. It was my manwhore brothers. They wanted to sow some wild oats or something stupid. I wasn’t going to reject her. But they were in so much pain the only way to stop it was to agree with them. On top of that, she had a boyfriend like two minutes later. Clearly, she is beautiful.”

Juliet- Awe, our sweet Finley. I want to pet him.

“Caroline, get ready to leave,” Tristian stands up. “My King, I have watched you for years. I have watched you when I was child and still watch as an adult. Your treatment of your children has always amazed me. Ariella is most likely the third most beautiful she-wolf created behind my own daughter and my mate. How you can look at your child and be so cruel is beyond my personal understanding. Prince Caleb, until you, an honorable man, take the throne, I believe I would rather my daughter not be raised around her grandparents.”

“You can’t take my granddaughter. She is all I have left of my precious Alicia,” Mom begins to sob.

Juliet - May want to grab your brother. He is about to lose his shit.

"What did you say? Precious Alicia?" Caleb screams with full Royal Authority rolling out of him.

I do as Juliet said and grab a hold of him.

"Caleb, stop," I say.

"How dare you?" Caleb shakes his head. "How dare you?"

"Sit down, boy," my father's command makes Caleb take a seat. "No one is claiming that Ariella is not beautiful. She just looks nothing like his first mate. She is more muscular, darker, and sturdy."

"What the hell is sturdy?" Finley asks.

"Your mother was clearly more delicate," My mom explains.

"Yeah, she was so 'delicate' she couldn't handle giving birth. Hence, Dad needing a second chance," Finley shrugs again and rolls his eyes. "So, I guess you mean Ariella will be able to handle pups."

"Yes, that is what we mean," Mom lies to him.

Juliet - Bless that boys poor little dumb heart.

"Finley, don't you dare insult your dear mother," Dove snaps at him. "Roseline was abused by her Alpha. She was weakened by years of neglect and mistreatment."

"Hey, Ari, you two have something in common," Caleb jokes and ignores Dad's growl.

Juliet- He has a point. Finch can heal us because he has already done it once.

Me- Part of me thinks Finch deserves better than being a rehab mate for the neglected.

Juliet- Hey, don't forget it was you who got us out of there. You saved yourself. Finch just completes the process.

"What does he mean, Finch?" Ren asks.

Juliet - Save him!

"My sister, who is currently in the cells, made me a target of her bullying. She was also able to convince my parents to neglect me as a child and teenager. She was very good, but I believe, well I was starting to believe anyway, that my parents had finally seen through her and were coming around. But clearly, they are not on my side," I look at my parents. "All the empty apologies. All the empty promises. Dad, are you even really looking into the crash?"

Again, my parents look down.

Juliet - Ok, so we can disown them now, right?

Me - I'm not disowning my parents.

Juliet - I really think you should. I mean it.

Me - NO.

Juliet - You will regret this decision.

"With all due respect to you as both, the King of Werewolves and my father-in-law. I think you should leave," Finch tells my Dad. "I won't allow anyone to insult my mate. Anyone."

Finch turns to his own mother and glares.

"I didn't do anything," Dove shrugs.

"Sure, you did, you brought up my Mom," Finley reminds her and everyone else too.

Juliet - He is so cute. I just want to pinch his little cheeks and pat his head.

I take the locket from my brother. She is blonde with green eyes. I see the boys. They got their coloring from their Mom.

"She is beautiful," I smile at the room. "I see where

the boys come from now.”

Finch kisses my hand. “I hope our own children also favor their mother.”

I smile.

“Oh, yeah,” Finley smiles. “I get to be a big brother. And I bet my brothers or sisters are just like their mother. Absolutely perfect.”

He starts eating and smiling happily. I can’t help but laugh at him.

Juliet- Ok, seriously, just scratch him behind the eyes or something. He is so precious.

I walk the locket back to Dove and hand it to her. She takes it from me with a smile. I roll my eyes at Finley, who is almost dancing in his seat.

Romana winks at me.

“I believe we have worn our welcome,” Dad shakes his head.

My parents gather themselves and prepare to leave. I follow them out of the dining room, holding my hand up to Finch, so he knows not to follow.

Juliet- This is our fight. I got you girl!