

Epilogue



Eighteen years ago, Oregon

“All clear.” I sucked in another deep breath just to be sure, picking up on a trace scent of deer and bunny, but no werewolf. “We’re alone.”

“I don’t sense anyone either. We’re safe.” Eli slid a thumb across my jaw and whispered, “I love you, Hannah.”

I gazed into his sparkling blue eyes. Nearly seven hundred years on the run with Eli and I’d never lost sight of the reason I’d escaped. I leaned forward to brush a kiss against his cheek. “Not as much as I love you.”

He inhaled sharply and grabbed my wrist.

My heart pounded as adrenaline pumped through my veins. What scent had he caught? Had they found us so soon? Why hadn’t I sensed it? “Are they here?” I whispered.

“No.” His grip relaxed, his eyes hardening as he

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stared at me. “You’re... pregnant.”

My eyes stung as dread balled in the pit of my stomach. A sob escaped me and the flood came fast and furious.

“It’s okay,” he said gently, wiping at the stream flowing to my chin. “We don’t have to try again.”

Try again... for a baby that would never survive past the first few weeks? There was no point even attempting it. And anyway, it wasn’t a baby yet. Just hours after conception, it was still only a handful of cells that wouldn’t live long enough for my body to realize I was even pregnant. No point in getting attached.

Yet I couldn’t help it. Every time it happened, I fell in love all over again.

And each time, the baby died.

I whirled and ran, racing over the dirt floor of the forest. Eli, still in his human form, followed close behind. If he morphed into something else, I couldn’t resist turning into a wolf. Werewolves always gave in to the need. Eventually. The baby would die and it would be over almost as soon as it had begun. Better to end it now before we pinned all our hopes on a child that could

never be.

“Hannah!”

I picked up speed and the wind lashed against my tear-soaked face.

To go through that again, to feel the baby’s heart beating inside me, only for the innocent child to die later... I couldn’t do that to Eli or myself. I couldn’t do that to my unborn child.

Not again.

“Hannah, it’s okay,” Eli called out.

My throat swelled. No, it would never be okay. My fate was sealed and I needed to get it over with. I moved yet faster, my legs a blur beneath me, the urge to morph rising. Any moment I’d feel the weightlessness, the tremor and then the nothingness.

But it didn’t come.

As my legs trembled from exertion, my grief faded and so did the urge to morph. I slowed to a gallop, then stopped at the edge of a clearing. Eli caught up to me and slowed too.

“It wasn’t meant to be. Just let it go, Hannah.” He
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wrapped his arms around my waist, pulling me against him. “I have *you*. It’s enough.”

I closed my eyes and let my head fall against his chest.

I’d controlled it. Not that I hadn’t before, at least long enough for my baby to form toes, fingers and develop a heartbeat — before I’d finally lose it. This time, though, it was different. Instead of the uncontrollable compulsion to morph, I felt serene. I lifted my chin and met his gaze. “It worked.”

He leaned back, his brows pinched. “What worked?”

“Your latest experiment. I was so close to shifting just now. Any other day, I would’ve let it consume me. But this time, when I felt myself near the edge, I managed to pull back.”

Hope lit in his eyes for a moment, then died. “But will you be able to control it five months from now or six? I don’t want you to go through this again. It’s not worth it.”

I imagined carrying my child — Eli’s child — in my arms. This time, though, I could almost feel the

weight of the baby against my skin, the soft baby scent of its hair. With renewed hope, I reached up to cup his face.

“Yes, it is. Our child is worth *everything*.” A calm settled over me and I just knew I could keep my child. But once he or she was born, then what?

Eli and I had escaped the werewolf king centuries ago and been running ever since. We were one step ahead of his scouts the entire way, but we’d almost been caught on numerous occasions. Even if I brought the child to life, fed it and clothed it, could we keep an extra person — someone so helpless — safe with the king’s scouts on our heels?



Books in the Shapes of Autumn series:

Thrown to the Wolves: The Legend of Hannah & Eli

(Shapes of Autumn, book 0.2)

My Wolf's Bane (Shapes of Autumn, book one)

Wolves at the Door (Shapes of Autumn, book two)

Look for more of Zack and Autumn in book three of the Shapes of Autumn series coming in late 2014.