

Chapter 4: Will You Be My Mate?

MYRA

The glow of my phone lit up under the desk, the tiny screen mocking me with its silence. I refreshed the chat for what had to be the hundredth time. Nothing. No reply. Not even a single tick to show he'd seen my message.

My chest tightened.

"Mason," I muttered under my breath, thumbs flying. If you don't reply me by tomorrow, I swear I'll find you and have your balls! I hit send before I could second-guess myself.

"Miss Clarke."

My head snapped up. Professor Halloway was looming over my desk, thick glasses glinting under the fluorescent lights. He dropped a crisp sheet of paper in front of me. An A+, written in bold red ink at the top corner.

"Consistent as always," he said, his voice echoing through the silent room. Then he turned back to the class, his tone sharp as a whip. "The rest of you, however, should be ashamed. Not a single one of you managed higher than a C-. Except for Miss Clarke. I suggest you all take notes from her discipline."

My stomach dropped.

The air shifted instantly, prickling the back of my neck. I didn't need to lift my head to feel the heat of twenty pairs of eyes drilling into me. Hatred, jealousy, resentment—it poured off them in waves so thick I could taste it.

I stared down at the paper, my grip tightening until the edges crumpled. I wanted to disappear into the desk. To crawl out of my skin and hide from their stares. Instead, I forced myself to pack my things quietly, eyes fixed on the clock.

When the bell rang, I was out of my seat before the sound even faded, clutching my bag like a lifeline. My feet carried me fast down the corridor, heartbeat loud in my ears.

Just make it to the dorm. Lock the door. You'll be safe there.

The Academy grounds stretched ahead, the afternoon sun spilling long shadows across the pavement. My stomach growled, twisting in protest, but I ignored it. Food could wait. Safety couldn't.

I was so focused on the dormitory doors up ahead that I didn't see the foot sliding into my path until it was too late.

My body pitched forward, crashing onto the concrete. Pain shot up my palms as my books scattered across the ground. Gasps and laughter rippled through the air, cruel and sharp.

I pushed myself up onto my elbows, dust sticking to my skin, and when I turned, I saw Richard storming for me.

And it wasn't just him, two others also flanked him, their grins wide and malicious.

"You think you can run away from us, huh?" Richard's voice was low, dangerous, and dripping with the kind of satisfaction that made my stomach clench.

I scuttled back on the ground, scraping my palms against the pavement. "I don't want any trouble," I said quickly, my voice barely steady.

Richard's grin widened, cruel and unrelenting. He stalked closer, the other boys snickering behind him.

"You don't want trouble?" he mocked, his shadow falling over me. Then his boot slammed against my shin. Pain exploded up my leg and I gasped, biting down on a cry. "You already made trouble. Clay's in a coma because of you."

My head snapped up, eyes wide. "What?"

Richard's face twisted with fury. "Don't play dumb. Yesterday, at the welcome-home party, you pushed him so hard he hit his head. Now the Healers say he might never wake up."

My stomach lurched. The memory of shoving Clay away, his mocking face, the jeers of his friends, flashed in my head. I hadn't thought it would... No, I didn't mean—

"I'm sorry," I stammered, the words spilling out. "I didn't—"

The sting came before I could finish. His hand cracked across my face, snapping my head to the side. Pain bloomed across my lip, warm

blood flooding my mouth.

Laughter erupted behind him, cruel and ringing.

My hands trembled on the ground. Sparks danced across my fingertips, tiny crackles of electricity threatening to burst free. My wolf surged inside me, snarling, begging to be unleashed.

No. I forced it back down, shaking as I wrestled for control. I couldn't let them see. Not here. Not now.

Richard raised his hand again, claws extending. "Sorry does not begin to cut how you'll feel when I'm done with you." He said and I tensed, anticipating the pain he was about to cause.

But then a strong hand clamped around his wrist mid-swing, halting him with effortless force.

I blinked through the haze of fear and blood and my heart thundered when I saw none other than Locke Helsing.

He loomed behind Richard, his face shadowed by heavy sunglasses, a thick Cuban cigar clenched lazily between his teeth. Dressed in black leather and dark jeans, he radiated danger in a way that silenced the laughter instantly.

"What did she do?" Locke nodded my way, his voice was low, smooth, and laced with a warning that made the air shift.

Richard winced, trying to yank his arm back. "Sh-she put Clay in a coma," he spat. "She's dangerous—"

Locke ignored him. His head tilted, and slowly, he crouched down in front of me. The world narrowed to the green of his eyes behind the glasses, sharp even through the tint.

"Is that so?" His question was soft, deceptively gentle, as if we were the only two people there.

I swallowed hard, my throat tight. The memory of standing in his bathroom days ago burned through me - the electricity in the air, the dangerous closeness. My wolf stirred again, restless, whispering things I didn't want to hear.

He's strong. He's alpha. Good for us. Let's bear his pups.

My body flushed hot. I jerked my head to shake the thought away, my pulse hammering. Locke's mouth curved in the faintest smirk, as if he'd

heard the words my wolf whispered.

He straightened slowly, turning his head toward Richard and the others. "Leave her alone."

Richard scoffed, finding false courage in the eyes of his gang. "You don't get to—"

In one fluid motion, Locke grabbed a fistful of Richard's hair, yanking his head back at a sharp angle. Richard yelped, claws retracting instantly. With his other hand, Locke took the cigar from his mouth and jammed the butte on Richard's neck.

The sickening hiss of burning flesh filled the air as Richard's scream tore through the courtyard, echoing off the Academy walls.

"I won't repeat myself," Locke said calmly, voice steady even as Richard writhed in agony. "Ever."

He released him, shoving him to the ground like discarded trash.

Richard immediately scrambled to his feet, clutching his blistering neck, tears streaking his furious face. Without a word, he and his lackeys bolted, their bravado turning into panic.

After they were gone, silence lingered in their wake and Locke turned to me, his tall frame blocking the sun.

For a moment that felt like eternity, we stayed in place, staring at each other. Then he stretched his hand towards me, waiting for me to take it.

But I didn't.

The tiny sparks still flickering in my palms made me afraid so I quickly pushed myself up, brushing dirt from my skirt. My knees still trembled as I bent down to grab my books with shaky hands but to my surprise, Locke crouched down too, picking up the ones I'd missed.

When he handed them to me, our fingers brushed and that single touch sent a wave of heat throughout my body. Our eyes locked, and for a long moment, neither of us looked away. There was something dangerous in his gaze, something that made my heart pound and my stomach twist all at once.

I forced myself to look away, stood up, and clutched my books to my chest. He rose as well, towering over me with his intimidating physique.

"We need to talk," he said simply.



I didn't know if I was in trouble or not, but I followed him. My legs felt like they weighed a ton as we walked across the Academy grounds to his sleek black car.

He opened the passenger side for me, and I slid in carefully, my chest tightening.

The silence stretched as he started the engine. Finally, his voice cut through the hum of the car.

"I want the throne," he said, his tone sharp, and direct. "But I need a girl to pretend to be my mate until I get it. You'll be heavily compensated."

I blinked at him, stunned. "Why me?"

His lips twitched, almost into a smile. "Because you're special."

I narrowed my eyes. "Bullshit."

He laughed then. Not the cold, cutting laugh I expected, but a warm, deep one. A sound that made my insides flutter against my will, and I hated that it did.

"You're smart," he said after his laughter faded, his voice dropping lower. "So I'll be honest. Before I met you, I had... an issue." He paused, his eyes holding mine. "With my junior member."

Heat rushed to my cheeks. I didn't want to understand, but I did.

"And somehow," he continued, leaning closer, "you fixed it. But to prove I'm fixed, I need you. I need you to show up with me, meet my family and the elders, convince them I'm fixed and pretend to be my mate until I get the throne. Simple."

He leaned in so close I could feel his breath against my skin. My lips parted without me meaning them to.

"What do you say?" he asked, his voice a dangerous whisper. "Will you be my mate?"