

Chapter 4

4. Friends of the past

"I see the dress suits you perfectly. I had to go down a few sizes considering how much weight you've lost," Diana said with a smile as she entered my room, catching me off guard.

I turned my head away from the window where I had been lost in thought, contemplating my problems. I stared at Diana without responding to her comment. She used to be my best friend, my sister, but now I was supposed to be her personal slave. Diana had become even more beautiful since the last time I saw her. She had matured into a woman, losing her girlish figure and demeanor.

Her presence exuded strength, and she carried herself with confidence, as if seeking to assert dominance. I couldn't tell if it was intentional or if it had simply become a part of her over the years. Regardless, there was no need for her to dominate me. I was nothing, no one. There was no need to display power to a girl who had nearly lost her connection to her wolf.

Diana's blonde hair was more golden than I remembered. Her skin sparkled as sunlight streamed through the window. Diana was incredibly beautiful - tall, elegant, and powerful. Seeing her made me self-conscious. I was the opposite of Diana in every way. I felt weak and broken, trapped without hope. Diana stared at me, considering her words. I struggled to control my emotions. I wanted to scream at her for abandoning me, never checking on me in the dungeons, letting the pack members treat me like trash, enduring humiliation, pain, and regular sexual assaults by Sean. I wanted to hate her, but I couldn't. She wasn't the cause of my misfortune. She wasn't my father or responsible for me being born into my family. She wasn't to blame for anything.

Still, I was angry at her for abandoning me. One day she called me her sister and best friend, and the next she cast me out like a stranger. But I was grateful. For the first time in three years, I slept in a comfortable bed, bathed without interruption, and chose clothes freely. I did little things that were once normal in my life, and for that, I was thankful. I wanted to hug her, but I knew to keep my distance. We were friends in the past, but now we were master and servant, at least for now. So, I stayed in place, waiting for her to finally speak.

"You are not a prisoner in my house," she finally said. "You can roam around the place, but sadly, you must not stray too far from the vicinity. My father would not be pleased," she added, a look of sadness on her face as she spoke. She pitied me. She pitied what I had become. I knew I looked pitiful, but I never imagined that Diana would see me that way in this lifetime.

"Thank you Di— Mistress," I lowered my head, biting my lips from the mistake I had just made

"Anna!" She sighed before continuing "You can address me as Diana, we used to be best of friends"

"Used," I muttered venomously. A bitter taste filled my mouth as a tear trickled down my cheek. Thankfully, my head was bowed, sparing Diana from seeing the pain in my eyes. I desperately wanted her to embrace me and allow myself cry out my pain on her shoulder. I longed for my best friend, but I was too scared to admit it. I feared rejection. Surely, Diana had made many friends while I was imprisoned. She had moved on with her life, and it pained me to know that.

"Okay," I replied meekly but I did not have the boldness to look her in the face.

"Your hair is longer, beautiful," Diana said, surprising me with her outward compliment. It had been a while since I had received a positive comment on my appearance, apart from the vulgar ones Sean filled my ears with while using my body.

"Thank you," I finally said, looking at her face. My black hair was indeed long, reaching my butt, but the texture was wild and unkempt. I hadn't had the privilege of visiting a salon for three years. That was another privilege I had just remembered losing. It's strange how, in captivity, we start to cherish the little things we once took for granted. For example, I hadn't seen a movie in three years, nor had I listened to a single song.

I wished I was human, I would have been living a normal and simple life, not that humans had it all easy but they get to have choices on how they led their lives, humans wouldn't have to be punished for the mistakes of their father, every man faced his own punishment for his sins, if I was a human by now I would be in college, dating a random guy, partying every other weekends and making sure I maintained my grades, if I were to be a human, I would be free.

Freedom, it felt like a foreign word every time it rang in my head. If I am able to leave this place eventually, I will lead a normal life, no mate, no pups but just me blending with the humans.

My wolf side would suffer and eventually disappear but maybe I was selfish, I was not much of a werewolf now thanks to the wolfsbane, it wouldn't be that much of a difference would it?

"What are my duties Mistress?" I asked, there was no need in mending whatever bond we had, things would never go back to the way they used to be, I have to move on from how things used to be in the past and look towards the future and what I could possibly make of my life, at this point I don't crave acceptance from my pack nor do I crave friendship from Diana either, all I wanted was my freedom, a chance to start a new life far, far away from here.

"I want you to call me Diana, Anna. We are still friends are we not?" There was a quiver in her words like she was the one that was dealing with a broken heart and a broken life.

"I can't mistress" I declared, I truly couldn't, it was not about my pride or anything else, rather I was embarrassed at the situation, I cannot simply act like three years had not breeze past us and I had not been locked up for three years in the same pack she lived in. "We are not friends, not anymore" I added though each words felt like a dagger to my chest

Diana immediately grabbed my hands, enclosing them in hers. But almost as soon as it happened, I pulled my hands away from her and took a few steps back, creating distance between us. I bowed my head down once again.

"What happened to you?" She asked and my head immediately snapped back up,

I chuckled sarcastically for a second before staring back at her. Rage had already built up in my chest, and it felt like my blood was boiling. I hadn't felt that much anger in three years. Instead, I had only felt despair.

"I don't think that should be a question, Diana. You have lived in this pack since the day you were born, and you still do. I'm sure the sad tale of Louisiana is not one that hasn't been heard by every pack member here and possibly beyond."

"Louisiana!" Diana cried.

"Your tears are a little late. Your precious tears should not be wasted on the daughter of a madman" I said out of spite.

"I wanted to help you, Anna. Believe me, I wanted to. But father sent me away a month after your punishment. He promised to free you after three months, and I agreed to leave. I have just returned, and when I saw you in the dining hall, my heart broke. I soon realized that you had been in captivity for three years," she cried, and my heart shattered at her confession.

For three long years, I had firmly believed that she had forgotten me, that she had callously abandoned me to my cruel fate.

"I have missed you," I managed to utter, tears streaming down my cheeks as my friend enveloped me in her embrace.

"I am so sorry for what you had to endure all that Anna. It hurts to think that I was not here to help you, you back you up," she cried, holding me even tighter.

I inhaled her floral scent, finding solace in its serenity—a peace I had desperately longed for. "I am grateful to you for rescuing me now."

"I have done what little I can. I cannot comprehend Father's actions. There is no justification for you still enduring punishment for a crime you did not commit. If I had not returned now, your suffering would have persisted," she said, releasing me from her embrace. I refused to let the coldness that followed her departure affect me; instead, I forced a smile.

She took hold of my hand and led me to the bed. "I will do everything in my power to help you and, one day, set you free. Perhaps I have the mate dance to thank for this opportunity."

"The mate dance?" I asked, puzzled.

"Yes. It is the reason I had to return. I have yet to find a mate, and this year, the mate dance will be held in our pack," she replied.

"Oh," I responded softly. The mate dance was once something Diana and I eagerly anticipated, a chance to find our destined partners if we hadn't by the age of eighteen. But now, I no longer cared for such prospects. I secretly hoped I wouldn't find a mate; my name was already tarnished, and no man would desire me due to my tragic past. I felt irreparably damaged, incapable of facing the humiliation of rejection. If the Moon Goddess chose to grant me a mate, I would be the first to reject him.

"Many werewolves from various packs will be attending. It will be a grand event, and surely, we shall find our mates," Diana exclaimed with excitement.

"We," I almost choked on the word, offering Diana a sad smile.

"You're not excited?" Diana asked, puzzled. I responded with a knowing look, and she sighed. "Oh," she said, understanding my unspoken pain.

"I am genuinely happy for you, though," I smiled at her. Truly, I was ecstatic on her behalf. If I couldn't live out my dreams, she should be able to.

"Surely, my father cannot deny you the opportunity to mate. This is absurd. The issue does not lie with him. I see no reason for this madness to persist. I will speak to him immediately," she declared, about to rush towards the door. I quickly grabbed her hand, halting her in her tracks.

"There's no need, Diana. Even if you were to convince him, I doubt anyone would want to mate with me given my history. This is my destiny, and it's okay. I accepted my fate long ago. I am simply grateful that I can speak to you like this again," I reasoned.

Diana hesitated, then settled back down on the bed. "This isn't fair. It's meant to be fun—a gathering where people come together, dancing, music, and freedom."

Freedom, the word resounded in my mind. The mate dance could indeed be my chance for liberation from this pack and from this life. With so many wolves present, engrossed in the festivities, no one would likely pay attention to a mere slave but and wellbeing. Perhaps this was a sign from the Moon Goddess, maybe this little freedom is what I need.