

In Love With My Best Friend Chapter 26

Astrea

I refused to sleep. I lay on the hard cement floor until I could muster up enough courage to stand up. He had branded me, yes. But I wasn't going to give up.

I wasn't brought up like that. I was taught to fight and struggle against injustice. I was instructed to strive against mistreatment. And I was trained to face the ugly truth of this cruel world. Although I had been pushed down into the dirt, I was going to brush the soot away and stand up. I would come back stronger and make them pay.

Previously, Calvin was just a wanted criminal. But now, he is more than that. He had done something he didn't have the right to. He had marked me against my will and I had an added resentment against him.

I clenched my jaws as I brushed my fingers on the crook of my neck. I flinched. It was painful and I thought it was swollen. My lips twitched. So the mark didn't work. My body was rejecting the mark.

"Hell, yes. I refuse to accept a forced mark!" Ash stated. "He forced himself on you and his essence felt like poison to me."

Her declaration made me smile. Nonetheless, the wound was still painful. It throbbed and I was sure that it would be red and swollen. I didn't have a mirror with me and there was none in the room I was kept in to check the mark out.

"I hope it doesn't get infected," I sighed.

"Don't worry, darling. We can do something about this. We just need to find a healer," she told me.

A healer... if only I could escape and go to the Palace.

"We need to get out of here," I grumbled as I walked towards the window.

"Yes. We should do that before Calvin tries something crazier... like forcefully mating with you," Ash stated, making me shudder.

“Dang. I hope that never happens,” I grimaced. I don’t want his filthy hands on me ever again,” I shuddered once again. “Or anywhere near me again,” I cringed.

She chuckled at my reaction.

“Me too. If that was his human, I would not be eager to meet his lycan. He didn’t hesitate to cooperate in marking you by force,” Ash agreed with me.

“Yeah,” I mumbled as I glanced out of the window. Though I didn’t know the exact time, I knew that it was late at night. I glanced at the sky. The moon was now in a silvery white colour and shining brightly in the night sky. I was confident that I was in their lair, most probably in the unclaimed part of the forest.

I peeked outside. I was in a room that was on the third level of the building and there weren’t any rogues in sight. However, I knew better than to believe that they would leave the building unguarded.

“Can we jump out of the window? Do you think we can take this jump?” I asked Ash as I inspected the thorny bushes that grew outside.

“I don’t think trying to sneak out of the door is a good idea,” I added.

“Right. We could try. I’m sure we will be fine.”

I took a few steps back and prepared to dash towards the open window.

“Here goes,” I whispered and sprinted, ready to shift as I jumped out of the window. I leapt out of the window and shifted Ash. The shift wasn’t hard. The rearrangement of my limbs and other organs was smooth and effortless.

The cool night air caressed her fur as she skillfully landed on all fours. She did stumble a little. It was the first time we had attempted a jump that high, but we did it.

I smirked internally as I briefly glanced at the open window I had jumped from. I guess it was their mistake to underestimate me and put me in a room with an open window.

Snickering under my breath, “let’s get out of here,” I linked to my wolf who was now in full control.

“On it,” she replied and dashed into the thick foliage of the forest.

However, before we could escape, I heard panicked cries.

“Hey! Hey! Come back!”

“Shit! Ash! Run fast!” I gasped. My heart was pounding frantically in my ribcage as my anxiety reached its peak.

Ash ran as fast as she could, jumping over the fallen logs and dodging to avoid the low lying branches. Thin twigs that got in my way broke as we rushed through the darkness of the woods. We ran, with no sense of direction. Only one thing mattered – fleeing the scene without getting caught. I heard howls and growls and I knew that they were close.

“Ash... try to find wolfsbane...”

I managed to whisper through my gasps of breath. If we could find a wolfsbane vine, we could throw ourselves in it and that would cancel out our scent. It would increase our chance of confusing them and escaping.

Alas, my luck was cursed. Ash’s leg got caught in a wolf trap, and despite her efforts to remain silent, a painful whimper escaped her lips.

“Dang it!” I hissed, inspecting the trap. Fortunately, it was a trap made of iron, which meant it was meant for regular wolves, not us. My heart fluttered.

“Ash, it isn’t made up of silver! If you can pry it off, you’ll heal in no time!” I exclaimed in enthusiasm. She grunted as she nudged the trap with her muzzle.

“Yes... but these paws... don’t have thumbs...”

I chewed on my lower lip, wondering if it was too late to shift. I wasn’t eager to get caught nude. But how could we know if we didn’t try?

“Shift, Ash. I will try to remove the trap,” I told her.

“But...”

“Hurry! We don’t have time!” I insisted.

I was fully prepared to shift back when a familiar, yet annoying scent hit my nose. My breathing got caught in my throat. My heart thumped in my chest as if it might jump out of the ribcage. They had caught up. I was doomed.

“Astrea...” Ash trailed off, but I knew what she was trying to say. Being found nude and vulnerable by a bunch of rogues would be dangerous. Especially when Calvin was claiming that we were mates.

The sound of the dried leaves crackling made me inhale a deep breath, as I prepared myself to accept my fate. Their distinctive scent intensified, followed by the sound of nasty laughter.

“Look at what we have! It is like the meal prepared itself for us!” they laughed and I felt the hair on the back of my neck rise.

“I know what you mean. She is such a beaut!” another rogue chuckled.

“I wonder if we could have the leftovers once the boss is done with her,” the third one snickered.

I shuddered. Could that really happen to me? No... it couldn't... please...

I held back a snuffle. Their conversation was scaring me. I started to wish that I had mated with Leo when I had the chance. Then, I wouldn't have regretted losing my virginity to the one I was in love with.

“Don't touch her. She is an alpha, as you can see. Link the boss and inform him that we have found her.”

Whimpering, Ash struggled to free her paw, but it was useless. Soon enough, he arrived. Oh, how I wished that I could wipe that irritating grin off his face. I hated him with every fibre in my being.

“Stop struggling, love. It will only cut your paw deeper,” his chuckles irked me to no end. I felt like snapping his head off him when he lowered himself to remove the trap from my paw, yet I held back.

“Be ready to run off as soon as you are free,” I told Ash. He glanced at me and grinned. My heart plummeted when he stood up and shifted to his lycan form.

“I know what you are thinking, my love. And no, you aren’t allowed to do that,” he whispered.

I gulped. He gestured to his men to remove the trap as he kept his glance fixed on mine. Ash attempted to run away, nonetheless. But we soon realised that the rogues had surrounded us. I let out a huge breath of despair. I was trapped. Someone grabbed Ash’s furry body and from the sparks I resented, I knew that it was him.

“Shift!” he ordered, but Ash growled in response. She wasn’t going to submit to him.

“Don’t worry. I’ll shield you from their lecherous eyes,” he whispered. I froze. I didn’t want to obey. I couldn’t care less if he shielded me or not. Baring her teeth, Ash let out another menacing growl and snapped her jaws at him. He sighed as though he was fed up with dealing with my rebellious nature, but he removed his filthy hands from her body.

I was glad when he did. I turned around to look at him and squinted at him in fury.

“Why do you keep doing this? Do you want me to knock you out again?” he asked. He was still in his lycan form, so I guess his lycan too agreed with his decision to rebel against the Queen.

I didn’t respond.

“I guess you want that injection again,” he mumbled.

I frowned. Again? What did he mean by that?

He smirked. “At least this time we won’t have to repeat the ritual. You are mine now.”

Ritual? The creases on my forehead deepened as I tried to recall anything related to a ritual. Ash was uncomfortably silent. In fact, she didn’t move a muscle. She kept staring at the deranged rogue lycan who was destroying our life

“Astrea...” she wheezed through our link.

“Yes?”

“I think he is referring to the time the rogues caught us months ago. Remember the time we woke up in the middle of a ritual circle?”

My eyes widened and I forgot to breathe. Memories of that horrible night came crashing in like an avalanche. Yes... unfortunately, it made sense. I was still in a stunned state when I felt a prick on my hind leg. I was too perplexed to react and to realise that someone was approaching me from behind.

I felt dizzy. I knew what was coming. I would fall into oblivion.

“Ash...” I called my wolf, but she too was slowly losing consciousness.

“Astrea...” I heard her weak voice one last time before everything went black.

In Love With My Best Friend Chapter 27

Astrea

Three days. Three long days had passed since that night. After I passed out, they took me back to their lair and locked me up. This time, I found myself in a blocked room. There were no windows and no opening that would provide proper ventilation. Just tiny slots high up on the wall that barely let any daylight in. That was how I differentiated between day and night.

I soon learnt that I couldn't reach anyone through the mindlink. It was as though the links were blocked. Anyway, I was glad that I had Ash to converse with, otherwise, I would have gone insane. However, the silver chains that bound me were slowly making her weak.

That's right. When I woke up, my limbs were chained up in silver. Even the tiniest activity only made my situation worse. The silver cut through my skin, hence I made minimal movement because I needed Ash with me.

I rarely had any visitors. The only time I saw anyone was when they brought me food twice a day. Anyway, I was glad that Calvin never paid me a visit. I would rather be alone than spend time in his company.

“Ash? Are we seriously going to give up?” I asked.

“No. Of course not.”

“But we need to get out of these chains to be able to do anything,” I sighed.

“Our only chance is by tricking the rogue who brings us food,” she stated. She was right. I had to think of something.

After some time, I heard footsteps. Wondering if it was already time for them to bring me food, I glanced at the locked door, expectantly.

I didn't feel hungry, however, I was looking forward to seeing that wolf again. I had to uncover a way to escape. He might even have a key... I just had to try something.

Alas, when I saw Calvin at the door, my heart sank and dread settled in my chest.

What was he doing? He never came to see me. Why would he pay a visit, if it wasn't to cause havoc?

I kept glaring at him as he strolled inside, surrounded by his loyal men.

“Hi, little mate. How are you feeling today?” an annoying grin was plastered on his face. Rolling my eyes, I pursed my lips and looked away. I wanted to show how uninterested I was in him. Yet, he didn't seem to be concerned about my lack of attention. He just chuckled and leaned towards me.

Annoying tingles erupted when he placed his finger under my chin and made me look at him.

“Feisty, aren't we?”

I narrowed my eyes on him. He was the most despicable individual I have ever met.

“What kind of a companion chains his mate up in silver?” I sneered.

Although I didn't believe him when he said that we were mates, I wanted to use it against him.

He stared right into my eyes, giving me the creeps. There was no emotion in them. His unfriendly countenance added to my discomfort. With each passing second, I felt my anxiety sky-rocket. The silence and his lack of response were quite unnerving.

The corners of his lips twitched a little after a while. “And what kind of a mate jumps off a window and tries to escape?”

I clenched my jaws. He wasn't my mate! I wanted to scream and tear his pathetic head off his body, but the burning sensation on my wrists reminded me of the silver chains that bound me.

"You... I don't believe that we are mates," I hissed into his face.

His lips suddenly stretched into a smirk as he stepped back. His eyes twinkled as though he was amused by my opposition.

"You know what? I wasn't interested in you before. But this... I am starting to like you. You are a fiery chick. Exactly my type," he snickered, earning an eye roll from me.

"Well, I never liked criminals in the first place and now, I loathe you with every cell in my body!" Tears of anger gathered in my eyes as I screamed at him.

He laughed along with his crazy followers.

"Girl... don't. Your anger will only fuel their amusement. Don't react at all," Ash weakly mumbled via our link. Panicking at how vulnerable she sounded, I hastily gulped down a breath and squeezed my eyes shut.

I must calm down. I had to. For my wolf's sake.

I chose to ignore the laughter that resounded in the blocked room. I was at their mercy anyway. Silent tears rolled down my cheeks as I struggled to contain my fury. I hated him and everything related to him.

"Aww, don't cry, my love," he chuckled. "We just found it humorous. I mean, you are shackled up, but still, you choose to rebel. It is funny, don't you think so?"

I pulled my lips into a thin line. I wanted to protest and retort against him, but Ash was right. My anger would fuel their joy in addition to tiring me out. When I didn't respond, Calvin leaned forward and frowned. I didn't like that the distance between us was so short. I needed him to leave me alone, forever. He grabbed my face and forced me to move my head so that he could inspect his ridiculous mark.

I held back my urge to resist, just for the sake of my wolf.

“That is bizarre. Why isn’t the mark healing?” He mumbled and stepped away. Glaring at him, I scoffed internally.

Because we weren’t mates, duh!

I wanted to say, yet didn’t. Instead, I decided to use the opportunity to interrogate them. I just might be able to catch an important piece of information.

“What do you want, anyway,” I asked. “And what ritual were you talking about the other night?” I added and pretended that I wasn’t aware of what he was talking about.

“You don’t remember?” He cocked a brow as I gave him the most innocent look I could muster.

“Well, I think you won’t forget that you were captured by a bunch of rogues some time back. They caught you and brought you to me. You wouldn’t remember that, because you were already oblivious,” he chuckled. “Seeing a beautiful young girl who wasn’t clothed was tempting, but we had better and more serious things to do.”

My heart thumped in my ribcage as I carefully listened to every word he said.

“It was a good thing you arrived at the right moment. We were worried that we wouldn’t be able to capture an unmated female in time. You see, the ritual had to be done on a full moon night. We had been trying every month and failing for six months. We were worried that our plans would fail if we couldn’t get our hands on an unmated she-wolf soon. If we didn’t catch you that night, we would have to go back, and try again next month. The ritual had to be completed before the night of the first blood moon this year.”

His eyes studied my demeanour as he spoke. I tried my best to be poised and show that I wasn’t affected by his words. But the truth was, I was petrified. It was the first time I was hearing what they did to me when I was senseless that night. I was partly eager and at the same time anxious. I wanted to know what they did, yet, worried because I knew that the consequences of the events of that fateful night would be disastrous.

He chuckled and looked at the rogue wolves who posed as his guards.

“See how curious she seems to be?”

I felt like crying out. Of course, I was interested in learning what they did to me that night. I started to feel that my life depended on it.

Snickering under his breath, “do you want to know what happened?” He asked.

I wanted to resist since I didn’t like to show even the tiniest bit of submission. However, my curiosity was eating me alive. I nodded timidly, my gaze fixed on him.

“Our friend used my blood to bind us. Ever since that day, we have been keeping an eye on you because we will need you on the night of the blood moon. That was when our bond would ripen,” he explained.

I frowned. The blood moon... could it be that I was the secret weapon they were talking about? Gulping, I faced him.

“We had gotten ourselves in a huge mess,” I told my wolf, who said nothing in response. I started to regret keeping that ordeal a secret. I should have confided in someone. Maybe Leo. He would have understood. I may have gotten scolded, but we could have braced ourselves for this.

“Any questions?” He asked.

Gulping, “wh... why me?” I inquired. My voice sounded softer than I wanted it to. However, realising that I was bound to this rascal by a forbidden force had shaken me up.

“Why? Because we had to get someone dear to the Queen. I wanted her to take this seriously. I was aware of her connection with the Dark Howl pack. If we could get someone from that pack, she would take me seriously, ” he shrugged his shoulders.

“Yup, we have fucked up. So much for being a stubborn prick,” Ash mumbled. I was too perplexed to reply to her. Before I could say anything, Calvin sauntered over to me and knelt on the floor so that he could look right into my eyes.

“At first I didn’t have any interest in you. I wanted you as my secret weapon and then waste you. But now, I want you as my chosen mate. I like fiery women and you are extremely interesting to me,” his low toned whisper felt

like poison to my ears. A cold shiver ran down my spine as the hair on the back of my neck rose.

When he leaned forward, I pressed my back against the wall. Nonetheless, he didn't seem to care. He cupped my cheeks and started to tilt his head towards me.

Was he going to kiss me?

I squeezed my eyes shut and turned my head just in time. His lips landed on my cheek. He growled and forced me to face him. When he captured my lips in a brutal kiss, tears rolled down my cheeks. Sparks erupted where our skin contacted, but I found none of it pleasurable.

After he explained what happened that night, I knew what they were. We were bound by blood using magic. That didn't sound acceptable to me. I had seen Leo's mom, Ava, and Amelia use magic in the pack. They never used blood in their spells. What Calvin told me sounded forbidden.

Tears of resentment were streaming down my cheeks when he finally broke the kiss. I felt used. He was taking what didn't belong to him one by one, but I was determined to annul all of that... somehow.

"You taste good," he smirked, "mate."

Holding back my sniffles, "and you leave a bad taste in my mouth, asshóle," I sneered, my voice quivering as I trembled in fury.

"They will come for me. Just wait. They will come and you won't stand a chance," I stated. I needed to hear the reassurance. I was starting to feel desperate.

Shaking his head as though he was fascinated, he laughed.

"How? They would never find this place. Do you want to know why?"

The way he stared at me made my chest constrict uncomfortably. I stared back at him. When I didn't respond, he waved his hand as though it didn't matter anymore.

"I'll tell you anyway. Because this place is shielded using magic. Even if they came here, they wouldn't see this place. To them, this place doesn't exist. So you tell me, how would they find you?" He chuckled.

A breath of despair escaped my lips. For the first time since I was captured by the rogues, I felt hopeless.

"Ash? Are you listening," I called the only one I could reach at the moment. Perhaps that shield was the reason why I couldn't reach anyone via mindlink.

"Yes," she sounded weaker than before. My heart plummeted, as I feared for the safety of my wolf. If anything bad happened to her, I would be anguished. I would be losing a part of me.

"My wolf..." my lips moved unintentionally.

Clicking his tongue, Calvin stood up and walked towards one of his men.

"Is the silver draining your wolf, my dear?" He seemed to be mocking me.

I wanted to cry, but not in front of him. Silver wouldn't hurt the lycans. He would never know the pain. I threw a spiteful glance at him. If only looks could kill...

I realised that he was taking something from the rogue. It looked like a little injection. My eyes widened. Not again!

"What do you want from me?" I started to panic.

"Nothing much, darling. And don't worry. This won't hurt you. It will make your wolf stronger. It will make you one of us. Then, when we defeat the Queen, I'll be the king and you will be my Queen," he mumbled out his answer.

I couldn't believe my ears. "What?"

He snickered and prepared to inject me with the contents of the injection.

"Don't worry, dear. This vial is perfectly generated in our laboratory. It is tested and proved. I think you shouldn't resist. We all know resistance doesn't prove to be healthy for you," raising his eyebrows, he offered a smile that made me shudder.

Vial? Was that the vial the group of rogues we encountered in the woods talked about?

My heart was erratic. Whatever that vial was, I was not interested in getting it in my system. When Calvin gestured to a rogue, he came with a cotton swab dabbed in a colourless liquid and started to wipe the skin on my arm.

“No!” I struggled, but the silver chains forbade me from moving much.

“Ah, ah,” Calvin shook his head. “I told you not to resist.”

There wasn't much I could do to avoid what was coming to pass. Calvin asked his men to hold me down while he injected the vial.

“This will help you and your wolf,” I heard him say, but his voice was muffled.

I felt the vial burn through my veins and my senses slowly depleted. What was going on? I wondered, panicking.

“Ash?” I wanted to hear from my wolf, although I was barely receptive.

Nothing. She wasn't there.

I closed my eyes. The best thing I could do was mumble a silent prayer before darkness engulfed me.

In Love With My Best Friend Chapter 28

Leo

I stared at the shimmering water of the lake. Ducks swam in the water. The cool evening breeze blew, ruffling my shoulder length hair, yet it brought no coolness to my aching heart.

I was going crazy and I had excused myself after the regular drills. It had been a month since they took her. Ever since that night, everyone had been working non-stop to find her. Yet, to no avail. There was no trace of her, not even a whiff of her scent.

Her parents, along with mine, had arrived at the Lycan Palace when they heard about what had happened. Everyone had been working together, and still, we couldn't find a clue. Our endless efforts were simply being wasted.

I remember how happy I was when I saw them come back safe and sound. Zelda was unconscious and Sir Elliot also wasn't truly awake. Nonetheless, after being treated in the infirmary, both of them recovered.

What bothered me was when I couldn't find Astrea. She was gone. I couldn't believe my ears when Xander told me that they had taken her in exchange for Zelda, who was unconscious. I thought he was joking. However, when Sir Elliot faced me, I knew that they were dead serious. Somehow, they had gotten their hands on the young princess and asked for Astrea in exchange. As soon as I heard about what had happened, I knew that was true. I didn't want to believe them, yet I couldn't deny the fact. She was an alpha and a brave girl. And she wasn't going to back off in a situation like that.

I picked up a pebble and threw it into the water. It sank into the water, forming ripples on its surface. Those ripples somehow reminded me of how her absence was influencing me. It was affecting my whole life, rippling its effects throughout everything I did. The training arena reminded me of her, hence I had to force myself to complete the drills. The game room in the Palace was worse. It reminded me of the day I confessed my feelings for her. Each time I passed by the closed door of her room, my heart shattered. I lost my appetite and I couldn't sleep. My entire life has become tedious. If it hadn't been for Zoro, I would have gone insane.

"We will find her," Zoro's voice echoed in my head. I chose to ignore him. He had been telling me that the entire time. A whole month had passed by with no results. As time passed, I knew the chances of finding any clues were diminishing.

What if we don't find her? What if they take advantage of her? They are rogues...

I licked my lower lip and speculated about the situation. They demanded that we give her, in exchange for the Royal Princess and that too, on the night of the blood moon. That could only mean that they were there for her.

My lips parted as I recalled what my great-grandma had told us. Could that mean that they were trying to form a bond with her? My heart raced. I couldn't understand why they would make that demand.

Even mom had spoken of it. I heard her mention it in one of their meetings. My heart broke into a million pieces when I heard that. I wasn't prepared to

see a day when she would be bonded with someone else. Especially if it was with someone who wasn't her fated mate.

"We will break that bond!" Zoro growled. Obviously, he was listening to my thoughts. Closing my eyes, I heaved a breath.

"I would love to do that. But what if she no longer wants us? Being bonded to someone is really weird. It's called being bonded for a reason. We won't yearn for anyone else," I responded.

"But she loves us. She wants us. Remember how she used to look into your eyes? Remember how she melted into your arms, each time you held her? Do you remember the sound of her sweet moans?" he complained. My chest constricted painfully as I closed my eyes. Her memories were sweet and bitter at the same time.

"Of course, I remember that," my voice was hoarse. Silence followed. Zoro was the only one who would understand the pain I was enduring.

"I miss her," I finally mumbled under my breath. A lone tear rolled out of the corner of my eye.

"Me too, buddy," Zoro whispered back. "I hope that she is safe, wherever she is."

I nodded my head.

The sun lowered itself and the light of the natural torch slowly diminished. Another day was over with no results. I forced myself to get up and move. I had to leave before it was too late.

"Hey Leo," as I was passing by the hedges in the park, a familiar voice made me halt.

Wrinkling my brows, I squinted at the figure.

"Natasha?"

"Yeah," she giggled as she strolled towards me. "I went for a walk when I noticed you were all alone. I thought I could give you some company," she smiled.

I raised my eyebrows. She went for a walk alone? That was not too strange, I guess. Nevertheless, I didn't like it when she attempted to talk to me. She hadn't tried to get close to me for a long time. However, I started to notice that she was trying ever since Astrea had gone missing.

"Uh, I'm fine. I am going back now, anyway," I waved my hand and turned to leave.

"No, wait, Leo," she held my hand. I glanced at her hand and then at her face. She was looking intently at me. I frowned. What was this woman up to?

"I need to tell you something," she seemed to be reluctant. "Please hear me out?"

She uttered, giving me a hopeful glance.

Sighing, "cool. But I need to go back as soon as possible, so hurry," I replied.

"Okay," she wheezed and stepped closer and placed her hand on my chest, making me go stiff. She bit a lower lip and traced circles on my torso with her index finger.

My frown deepened. She glanced at me, and batted her eyelashes.

"The fúck dude! She is bad news!" Zoro exclaimed in my head. He was right. This chick didn't seem like she was going to say anything I wanted to hear.

"Stop it!" I demanded and removed her hand.

"Why, Leo?" She whispered. "I think we should try something. We should try to become more than just friends... you know, like Xander and Danisha. We would look great together," she forcefully clung onto my torso.

"What the fúck, Natasha! Leave me alone. I'm with Astrea. You know that," I retorted as I tried to peel her off me.

"Astrea? But she is gone!" She responded rather strongly.

Grimacing, she faced me. "I don't understand why you are so after her. She is just a wolf..."

I clenched my jaws and let out a growl as I thrust her away. She staggered backwards with the force I pushed her away with and she almost landed on the grass.

“She isn’t gone. She will be back. She sacrificed her safety for the sake of a little girl who still couldn’t recollect what happened to her that night. Yes, she is a wolf. So what? She is fearless and wouldn’t hesitate to do the right thing,” I growled with barely contained rage and paused for a while. I was heaving deep breaths, hoping to control myself before I lost control of my anger. Her disrespect was unacceptable.

“If you want to make yourself a bit useful, you could stop getting on my nerves. All of us are concerned about her safety. A massive threat is looming over us and we aren’t safe yet. Staying out of my way would be a great help,” I was furious. Natasha shouldn’t have insulted her.

“I know you don’t like her, but guess what? She is the girl I want,” I started firmly, looking her right in the eye.

She huffed out in annoyance as she straightened her skirt.

“What are you going to do when she finds her mate? Wolves literally worship their mates. They are everything to them. Some of them kill for their mates. God forbid that happening to you. I am sure that she will leave as soon as she meets her fated one. Then you will be left alone,” she snapped back, clenching her fists.

“What makes you so sure? We are in love. I love her and she loves me. I don’t care about anything else,” I hissed back, and took brisk steps away from her.

I knew she was after me. This was the first time she made such a blunt statement, and when she did, she truly crossed her limits.

“You’ll come back! I just know you will!”

Her shrieks got carried away with the wind as I rushed out of the park. Scoffing, I dashed towards the Palace. I couldn’t care less about what she surmised. To be honest, even if Astrea left me after she found her fated mate, I just couldn’t see myself being with Natasha.

Not even in a million years. I was still fuming when I ran up the stairs and hurried towards my room. Running into Natasha had riled me up and I needed

to vent off... alone. However, I encountered my mom in the aisle who seemed to be looking for me.

“Leo, let’s go and have something to eat,” mom invited me as soon as she saw me. I sighed and glanced at her. I wasn’t in the mood to eat anything. I just wanted to go to sleep, hoping to wake up to a better day.

“You haven’t eaten anything, even during lunch. Please, Leo. For me?”

She pleaded before I could decline. My muscles relaxed. She was begging me to have some food. My lips parted. I just couldn’t say no to her. How could I decline my mother’s pleas? A sad smile curled on my lips, yet I nodded. At least my little gesture brought some amount of pleasure to her. Her face lit up when I agreed and led me towards the dining room.

When I saw the food on the table, my gut clenched uncomfortably. All I could think of was her – Astrea.

“Zoro? Do you think she has eaten anything?” I asked my Lycan.

He let out a humourless chuckle before shrugging his shoulders.

“I sure hope so,” he mumbled and retreated to the back of my mind.

The meal time was extremely silent like it always had been during the past month. No one joked or spoke much. Everyone was baffled and worried.

I glanced at Alpha Miles and his mate, who was putting up a brave face in front of everyone. They hadn’t left the Palace ever since they arrived. Our pack was under the supervision of the gamma couple while they joined the search. Seeing them around was hard. It reminded me more of her. I looked away and focused on my food. They didn’t question my silence. I suppose they were reckoning I was worried about my best friend. Honestly, it didn’t matter much even if the Queen had told them about our relationship. I didn’t care about what they might say. I just wanted her back and safe.

“Leo, have some chicken,” mom said, placing some meat on my plate.

I gulped.

I sure hope you are okay, Rea.

After dinner, Xander walked me to my room. He didn't say anything and I appreciated the silence.

"I'm sorry I didn't stop her that night. I was hoping that her little plan would work. You know, trick them and save everyone. I just didn't expect them to... I'm sorry," he sighed.

I forced a smile. "It's okay. You had no control over what happened. It was the dark wizards. I'm sure," I paused. "Xander, I'm sorry. I know I haven't been very active recently..."

He clicked his tongue and patted my back, smiling.

"Hey, I understand. We are all worried. I just wish I had been able to stop her that night," he told me.

Shaking my head, I smiled sadly.

"You wouldn't have stopped her anyway," I told him. I knew her well. She wouldn't hesitate to go with the rogues if it meant saving a life. Besides, the dark wizards were cunning. None of us would have predicted that they would cast a spell.

I went to my room and he went to his. After freshening up, I laid down on the bed. I closed my eyes wishing I had something to remember her by.

I woke up in the middle of the night. Zoro was agitated. The unrest in my head had caused me to lose sleep.

"What happened, Zoro?" I asked, yet I received no answer.

That was strange. I could feel the internal chaos and it was giving me a headache. Kneading my temples, I grunted. Something wasn't right. Thinking that some fresh air could help, I walked over to the window and opened it. It was a full moon night again and the silvery light of the moon reminded me of the necklace I had given her.

I forced a smile. "I hope it's still close to your heart, Rea."

Knitting my eyebrows together, I tried to contact Zoro once again, yet my efforts were in vain. I sighed and leaned against the windowsill. At least the cool breeze of the night was enlivening.

I remained like that, hoping it would convey some solace to the internal mayhem of my lycan. Minutes ticked by with no progress, until Zoro's gruff command resounded in my head.

"Shift!"

In Love With My Best Friend Chapter 29

Leo

"What?"

I was barely able to exclaim when a sharp pain jolted throughout my frame. My muscles stiffened and my eyes dilated. I sucked in a breath as I braced myself for the whole process to be completed. I knew it would be tough and there was no one to comfort me. Nevertheless, I couldn't go to look for help.

Relax, relax!

I told myself. I had heard a lot about the first shift. It was always severe. Since we grew up in our human bodies, we were used to it, and the rearranging of the bones and muscles were excruciating.

I looked at my arms and noticed dark fur sprouting from the skin. I gulped. I knew what to expect. Fur would cover my entire body and my bones would elongate. My muscles would bulge and my face would contort, forming a snout.

Since I was a Lycan, even after the shift, I would stand on my hind legs. Which meant, unlike the wolves, my backbone would remain straight.

Squeezing my eyes shut, I prepared to receive the next wave of distress. A sharp jolt of pain that originated from my spine spread throughout my limbs. It was time for my limbs to change shape.

I grunted in anguish. Lentils of sweat trickled down my face, which was distorted as I tried to withstand the agony. My limbs were slowly and painfully elongating. I felt my muscles stiffen even more than they already were.

My eyes shifted towards my hands. When I saw how my nails adapted themselves to evolve to sharp claws, my eyes widened. My hands changed shape right before my eyes. And so did my structure. Finally, it was time for my face to alter.

I felt waves of pain ripple through my skull as the bones twisted and changed form. My nose stretched, forming my snout and I slowly felt myself being pushed inside.

My senses heightened and the pain subsided until it was no more. After inhaling a couple of breaths, I attempted to speak, but I soon remembered that I wasn't in control of the body.

"Zoro?" I called him.

"Yeah," he replied through our link.

A grin spread across my face. "We shifted!"

"Hell yes, we did!" he exclaimed. "Let's go for a run!" he announced.

"What? A run? In the middle of the night?" I was hesitant.

"Oh come on. Don't be such a spoilsport!" he mumbled.

"But it's the middle of the night and who knows if a rogue isn't hiding in the woods to ambush us?" I pointed out. Nonetheless, Zoro wasn't ready to listen to me.

"Then, I think it's time to put them in their places. They have taken our girl! Remember? We are going to finish them off!" He growled.

Sighing, "I wish it was that easy, Zoro. But going into the woods all alone with no backup is dangerous. We want to save her from the bad guys, not get caught and end up becoming their slave," I tried to explain the severity of the situation.

"I think we can jump from the window," he mumbled, glancing outside.

Rolling my eyes, "you aren't listening, are you?" I commented.

He didn't even bother to reply. The next thing I knew was, the cool night air was ruffling his fur as he landed skilfully on the soft earth.

“I promise I won’t run too far,” he vowed, and took off into the woods. I watched as he ran like a ferocious beast through the thick foliage, carefully weaving through the trees. He ran until we were pretty close to the perimeter. The lookouts were on duty but, thankfully, Zoro didn’t attempt to approach them.

He hid behind a bush and sniffed the air.

“No rogues nearby,” he mumbled.

“Dude, let’s go back. They will suspect us if they realize that we were hiding here,” I hissed through our link.

“Just run away before they start to sense your scent in the air. We just shifted and, though we smell like us, it would be the first time they see you and I am not ready to deal with hogwash. The day hasn’t even started yet!” I sighed.

“Fine!” Zoro grumbled. “But I will find her!”

A smile curled my lips as he hastily dashed back to the palace.

“We will, Zoro,” I whispered back, feeling hopeful about finding her. Now that I had shifted, I would make sure that I wouldn’t leave a stone unturned.

“Do you think we can use our powers in the lycan form?” I voiced my thoughts as he entered the city.

“We should,” he mumbled, halting on his steps. He opened his fists. I felt the energy bubbling in the veins before the familiar flame danced on his palm.

I smirked. It has been quite some time since I started to learn and train my powers. Grandpa had been a great teacher and I had learnt a lot during the past month.

“You know what this means, Zoro,” I felt determined. We will definitely find her!

“f**k yes! It’s time to burn some rogue asses!” he exclaimed.

Oh, yes. It’s time to make them pay. My smirk widened.

I shifted back as I reached the city and rushed towards the main gate of the palace. When I reached the main gate, I saw that the warriors were rushing on

the veranda, apparently going to the open ground in front of the training arena.

Frowning, I stopped a warrior who was rushing past me. I needed to know what the havoc was about.

“What is going on?”

“We received an urgent order from the Queen to fall in. The rogues are approaching us and we don’t have much time before they reach the borders,” he urgently explained before whisking past me.

My breathing hitched. I had just returned from the perimeters but didn’t notice anything absurd. I darted towards the arena to find someone who could explain the situation better.

“What’s happening?” I asked as soon as I saw Arnold.

“The rogues! They are coming!” He was delirious.

“What?”

Xander patted my back and gestured to Arnold to join the warriors.

“They are about a couple of miles away now. We don’t have time. They might invade the land...”

“But I just came back from the borders...”

“What?” He exclaimed.

“Leo! Why? You could have gotten into a lot of trouble!”

I shrugged. Frowning, he shook his head.

“Never mind that. Stay here...”

“I’ll go,” I stated, cutting him in.

“What? No. You can’t!” He obstructed, staring at me as though I had lost my mind.

"I have shifted, Xander. I just came back from my first run... actually Zoro didn't heed when I told him to stay. Anyway, I want to join. I need to go and find her," I told him and his features slowly softened.

"Then it would be okay, I guess. But let's meet mom and dad before that."

We weaved our way through the frantic soldiers to meet the leaders. Sir Elliot was barking out orders to the warriors while the Queen was trying to make sure that the children and the elderly had entered the safety bunkers.

"The infirmary is on standby. Is everything ready?" she was apparently agitated.

Sarah, who was on her right, nodded her head.

"Your highness, I would like to join you. I had shifted," I knew they were flustered and time was limited. So I told them as promptly as I could.

Placing her hand on my shoulder, "You shifted? That's good. Because we need everyone and every resource we can use," she hastily replied, and went back to attend the more urgent work.

My heart soared as I joined the army. Alpha Miles, his mate and my parents were part of it. What surprised me was finding my grandpa on the sidelines.

Of course, it was reasonable. We needed to fight against magic.

"Zoro, ready to kick some asses?" I asked my Lycan.

"Oh, hell yes! Let them burn!" He growled.

We were able to arrive at the perimeter barely in time. The stench of burning rubber was prominent in the atmosphere. A massive army of rogues were lined up, prepared to cross the border. If we hadn't arrived in time, they would have simply murdered the wardens and invaded the land. The army of rogues was huge and they clearly outnumbered the number of patrols at the perimeter.

I narrowed my eyes at the tall figure who was glaring at the Queen. It seemed to me that he was the leader of the rogues. I guessed that was Calvin.

"So we meet again," he sneered. Clenching my fists, I gritted my teeth, growling under my breath. Arrogance radiated from him and he strolled

casually in front of us. In his troops, some of the rogues had shifted to their wolf forms.

“Where is she?” The Queen demanded, in between her written teeth.

He chuckled. “Who? Oh, you mean my chosen bride?”

I felt my anger skyrocket. His chosen bride? The audacity!

“Where is our Astrea? What have you done to her?”

The sound of the Queen’s growls resounded in the forest. The power that radiated from her was enough to make our knees go weak, yet Calvin didn’t seem to care.

He laughed, seemingly amused at her outburst.

“Don’t worry, she is fine. Or maybe, I should say that she has never been better,” he snickered and snapped his fingers.

A familiar girl surrounded by rogue wolves walked forward, wearing her tight combat clothes. My heart skipped a beat. It was her! Her face was void of emotions as she stared straight at us.

My breathing caught in my throat.

“Astrea!” her mother screamed.

I gaped at her expectantly, hoping to see some kind of an acknowledgment. However, there was nothing. She didn’t react.

“Leo... her eyes...” Zoro mumbled. My lips parted. Her eyes were hollow like two pits of desolate gloom. The life that radiated in her wonderful orbs was no more. It was then I realised that she had changed. Perhaps it wasn’t her fault. Maybe they had cast a spell on her.

“I hope she is just pretending to be on their side,” I heard Rafael mumble beside me.

“Me too,” Elena whispered.

“Is this the girl you are speaking of?” Calvin chortled as he wrapped his arms around her shoulder. I winced. I didn’t like it when she didn’t resist his touch.

To my dismay, he licked the side of her face. I had to hold onto every ounce of vigor not to lunge at him in fury.

“She is my chosen bride. Meet the future Queen of the wolves,” Calvin announced, conceit dripping out of every syllable he uttered.

“You have done something to her!” I growled, balling my fists. I couldn’t help it.

Chaos broke as soon as The Queen ordered us to attack them. Unknown to the rogues, she specifically instructed us to make sure that Astrea doesn’t get hurt via mind link.

I fought off the rogues who advanced at us, all the while, keeping an eye on Astrea. Soon, I realized that she seemed to be following Calvin’s orders. She showed no mercy, as she slashed through our warriors. Our friends surrounded her, and tried to face her, careful not to hurt her. She didn’t seem to recognise anyone. They were beaten up, one by one.

After I defeated a group of rogues, I confronted Astrea. She used her skills to fight against me. Even in her human form, she was a skilled combatant.

“Snap out of it, Astrea!” I whispered as I blocked her punches and kicks. Finally, I succeeded in holding her arms firmly so that she couldn’t move. I was shocked to see her pitch black eyes. They were not the usual hazel colour.

“Astrea! It’s me, Leo!” I tried to connect with her. I knew she was in there somewhere. However, she didn’t respond. A ferocious growl flared from her throat as she struggled with all her might in my hold. Meanwhile, my eyes darted to the crook of her neck. What I saw made my blood boil in anger. There were two puncture marks on her neck. The skin that surrounded the marks was red and swollen and there was a clear fluid oozing from the mark.

“That fucker has bitten her!” Zoro roared in anger.

“Shift!” I heard Calvin’s order.

Astrea took advantage of my distraction and pushed me away. I staggered back, despite the fact that I was shaking in fury. What happened next was beyond my imagination.

Astrea started to shift. Aghast, I helplessly watched as her limbs changed form. Her arms and legs elongated while black fur sprouted all over her body. Her muscles bulged out and soon her shift was completed.

Instead of her midnight black alpha wolf, a black bipedal wolf stood on her hind legs in her place. Nightmare struck us as she lifted her head up to the sky and let out a howl of triumph.

Was this really my Rea?

In Love With My Best Friend Chapter 30

Leo

“Let me take over,” Zoro enunciated through our link and I obliged at once.

It was my second shift and though the shift was a bit rough, it wasn't as severe as the first one. I gasped as my skull twisted, marking the end of my shift.

By the time Zoro had emerged, Astrea, or conceivably Ash's new form, was mercilessly ripping through the royal army. Our friends, being regular wolves, stood no chance against her.

A group of rogue wolves who attacked us, held us back.

“Finish them off!” I gritted my teeth.

“With pleasure,” Zoro growled.

He ruthlessly killed any villain who stood in our way. Some of them got burnt, and others got mutilated. Seeing their blood spill gave me a new kind of satisfaction. Soon, the wolves stepped back and left me alone.

The lycan military was taking care of the remnants of the army of villains while our focus was on one particular bipedal wolf. Our parents' tireless efforts were protecting Ash and our friends from the rogues who tried to sneak up on us.

By this time, almost all the wolves had transformed into their wolf forms on both sides. I didn't have time to check out the casualties. My heart skipped a beat when I noticed my mom confronting Ash. Mom was a skilled combatant and experienced at magic. I knew that she was being careful not to hurt her

from the way she battled against Ash. Nonetheless, Ash wasn't showing any tenderness.

I felt like my soul had departed my body when Ash slashed through my mom's arm and she screamed in agony.

"Mom! No!" I shrieked. Zoro instantly lunged forward to confront Ash.

"Ash! Stop this nonsense!" He growled as he attempted to prevent her from causing more damage.

A mixture of emotions simmered in my chest as I watched her expressionless eyes. They looked like two black pools of an endless abyss. Finally, she succeeded in landing a mean punch on Zoro's abdomen, making him stagger backwards, coughing.

"She is going to crush us," Zoro croaked as he struggled to gather himself.

He was right. She doesn't recognise any of us. Although we were being careful not to hurt her, she wouldn't counter in the same way.

"Retreat!" Calvin's voice boomed over the commotion of the battle. I smirked internally. Did he accept defeat so soon?

"She is going to leave!" Zoro exclaimed through our link, panicking. However, when we peeked in her direction, we saw that Rex, Sir Elliot's lycan, was holding her elbows, restraining her movements.

My lips tugged in a smile. The rogues were retreating one by one. Apparently, we had won this round. Mom also had healed and stood up on her feet. Zoro hastily straightened himself to face her.

"Ash! Look, it's me," he exclaimed.

She let out a ferocious roar in response, as she struggled to rid Rex, but to no avail.

The rogues had left and the mayhem had died down. Thankfully, Calvin too was nowhere to be seen. Their scent was slowly diffusing into the atmosphere, which meant they were gone. At least for now.

It was over... finally.

At least that was what I thought. I reckoned we had everything under control when a female warrior advanced towards the restrained bipedal wolf.

Wait... Was that Natasha? What was she doing? My eyes widened when I saw that she was holding a silver dagger.

“Wait! No!” I screamed, yet wasn’t fast enough to thwart her.

Natasha lunged at Ash. Neither our parents nor the Royals expected her to attack Ash and that too, in front of everyone.

“No!” I shrieked as she prepared to plunge the dagger into Ash’s abdomen.

Everything happened in slow motion. Rex’s eyes widened when he realised what was about to happen. He tried his best to shield Ash, while keeping her suppressed.

My mom, who was standing closest to them, started to move to stop Natasha, but a brown wolf who intervened was faster. He intercepted the blow and the silver dagger was buried in his fur. A loud whimper resounded in the air before he collapsed onto the forest floor.

Natasha staggered back, shocked. Sarah and Elena were quick to arrest her. I watched, dismayed, as the injured wolf morphed back into his human form.

“Arnold!” I gasped as Zoro rushed to aid him.

“Hurry! Take him to the infirmary!” Someone shouted. Rafael was already in his wolf form, ready to carry his friend so that he could receive the medical assistance he needed.

“What is the meaning of this, Natasha?” The Queen growled at her as Zoro placed Arnold’s limp body on Rafael’s wolf’s back. He dashed into the darkness as soon as Arnold’s body was positioned.

Please be okay. I thought as I watched him run away.

“I... I thought she was an enemy... she...” Natasha stammered. I scoffed. Why was I having a feeling that she was lying? I sneered as I threw a coarse glance at her. The Queen shifted back to her human form and glared at Natasha, who was now restrained by Elena and Sarah.

“What? I have given specific instructions not to hurt Astrea!” She was undoubtedly infuriated.

“I... I...”

“Shift back, Zoro,” I commanded, and Zoro was quick to oblige.

“You did that on purpose! Didn’t you?” I sneered as soon as I shifted.

“L... Leo?” She stammered. “I... I didn’t know that you shifted...”

“Why did you try to hurt Astrea?” I demanded, ignoring her question. Our parents and the rest of the warriors were now glaring at Natasha, waiting to hear her response.

“Jealousy, I believe!” Sarah ridiculed in between her gritted teeth.

“What?” the Queen was confused.

A grunt that originated from Ash interrupted our conversation.

“We need to take her to the palace and try to reverse whatever they did to her,” Rex was barely able to hold her down.

The Queen stole a quick glance at the restricted bipedal wolf and then at Natasha, who was struggling against Sarah and Elena.

“Lock her up. We need to interrogate her. But we have an urgent matter we need to attend to,” she commanded, and the warriors hastened to carry out her orders.

“She is under a spell,” mom mumbled, studying the untamed wolf.

“I can try to reverse it,” my grandpa announced and stepped forward.

“Help me hold her down,” Rex grumbled. He was visibly struggling to keep her bound.

I quickly let Zoro take over and rushed to aid them. I felt Zoro’s distress as he approached the feral bipedal wolf without any hesitation.

“Ash, snap out of it,” he begged as he held on to one arm while Rex curbed the other. Grandpa approached her and attempted to place his hands on her temples. However, she snapped her jaws at him.

“Dang, she is feral,” Allan, who was now in his human form, mumbled.

“I wonder what could bring her out of it,” luna Calli whispered, worriedly studying Ash’s countenance.

I eyed the place where I noticed the raw mark that seemed to be infected. Even over her fur, the crook of her neck seemed to be swollen.

“Zoro, look! Her neck,” I alerted him.

He squinted at the mark and shifted his foot.

I should lick that.

Zoro’s thoughts stunned me. My whole body went rigid as I hastened to respond before he did anything.

“What the f**k, Zoro! Can’t you think of something else? Everyone is watching!”

“I must...”

He mumbled and before I could protest, he lowered his head to the crook of her neck and started to lick the mark.

Groaning, I covered my face in embarrassment. What would my parents think? And what would her parents feel? I regretted reminding him of the infected mark, yet the damage was done.

“What the...”

I winced when I heard Alpha Miles voice his shock. The chatter among the warriors died down and an eerie silence spread throughout the region. Zoro didn’t seem to care. He continued to lick on her wound, enjoying every bit of it.

Surprisingly, Ash seemed to calm down and slowly, Zoro wrapped his arms around her, as he continued to run his tongue over the crook of her neck, cleaning the mark with his tongue. He held her tightly in his embrace and I noticed that she was slowly leaning against us.

I cringed. Our wolves were putting up a show for everyone to see. However, I couldn't deny that I enjoyed being close to her. Although we were in our wolf forms, and she was looking a bit different, I loved it. No one was complaining.

The swelling was decreasing and I felt my heart swell with pleasure.

"Zoro! You're a genius! It's working!" I exclaimed, overjoyed. Maybe I could tell them that Zoro licked her wound for healing purposes? I wondered if they would buy that.

I understood that our parents might have gotten the shock of their lives, yet, I believed it was worth it.

Slowly, I started to detect her wonderful scent. Oranges. Perhaps she was coming back. My heart raced and soon I found myself enjoying the moment.

Zoro seemed to be deeply immersed in whatever he was doing. Ash leaned against my torso, craning her neck to the side, giving us better access. I suppose she also liked it. No wonder. The irritation on her neck must be reduced.

What I didn't realise was that Rex had let go of her and that I was the only one holding her in place. Grandpa was using the opportunity to use his charm on her. He placed his hand on her temple and started to mumble something under his breath.

Minutes ticked by. Yet Zoro didn't let go of her. While my grandpa's chant intensified, I felt a small spark erupt. My breathing hitched. What could that mean?

"Zoro?" I called my Lycan, but he wouldn't stop what he was doing, until the Queen sighed heavily.

"That's enough, Zoro," she solemnly mumbled.

Zoro reluctantly stepped back, allowing Ash to turn around. I was glad that he at least heeded the command of the Queen.

My grandpa then took a little bottle from his pocket and sprayed its contents on Ash and stepped back.

I gulped. Was the spell broken?

Ash was still a bipedal wolf, yet, her eyes no longer looked like two pits of extensive chasm. Our gazes met and my heart skipped a beat. I knew everyone was watching us, yet I couldn't look away. I felt as though I was getting lost in her eyes. It felt... magical.

"Well, this is awkward."

That sounded like Sir Elliot. Perhaps he shifted back. I couldn't care less. She was back. My Rea was back.

Shaking her head, "shift back, both of you," the Queen ordered. "Can you do that, Ash?" She asked.

She closed her eyes and nodded.

"You may all go back. We will soon follow," the Queen announced, and the soldiers started to leave the area.

Heaving a deep breath, "shift back, Zoro," I mumbled.

We shifted. I kept my gaze lowered while Sarah approached Astrea with a spare shirt. I knew our parents were drilling holes in us. I could feel it.

"Nice move, dude," I mentally grumbled.

"It did bring her back. Thank me later," Zoro snickered and I held back my urge to roll my eyes. He did have a point. An embarrassing muteness spread in the air.

They just might believe it when I say Zoro did that to heal her.

I pursed my lips.

"No, they won't believe you," Zoro uttered, rolling his eyes.

"I think we should go back? We still have a lot of unsolved problems," it was Sir Elliot who broke the awkward silence.

"Yes, we should," my mom sounded suspicious. I glanced at her. I was right. She was staring at me as though she wanted to ask a lot of questions.

I cringed internally before stealing a glance at Astrea. As soon as I did, I went rigid. My eyes dilated and my muscles stiffened. The force of attraction I felt towards her was undeniable.

“Mate?” She whispered, her eyes glossing with tears.

My heart skipped a beat.

What?

My lips curled into a smile. Could it be?

“Yup. She is ours,” Zoro confirmed.

A short breath escaped my lips and I held back the urge to rush towards her and claim her then and there.

“Mine!”

My lips moved. My voice sounded gruff, more like a growl. I no longer cared what others thought about us. After realising what we were, I felt that Zoro’s actions were justified. He most probably felt an urge to heal his mate. Perhaps the spell was blocking our connection. It didn’t matter anymore. Nothing else was important. Nothing amounted to the fact that she was mine.