

Chapter 16

My head hurts...

Something cold, heavy, and painful is lacerating my wrists. I feel heavy myself, almost numb. Where am I? It's so dark... Something reeks, too. What happened to me? I feel so weird. Like I've been... drugged.

I can't see a thing, but it's horribly cold, and my instincts tell me I'm underground... a basement? There doesn't seem to be any window or any air circulating. It feels like a small room, yet I can't hear anything but my own breathing. No wait, something's dripping... Some water?

I'm so cold. I struggle to remember, but with this headache... How long have I been there? What about Damian? Where is my mate? Is he fine? There was... so much blood... Did someone help him? I want to ask my wolf, but I can't feel her at all! This is so weird like she's... asleep or gone. I've never felt so utterly alone. I feel like I was a few years ago. It terrifies me.

The battle... The explosions... Who did this, and why? So many people died or were severely injured. Moon Goddess, I hope the highest number possible survived this. What was the Gold Moon Clan thinking? Did they lose it when they understood William wouldn't side with them against Damian?

Suddenly, I hear a ruckus. What's going on? Footsteps? Someone is approaching. Gosh, my leg and head are so painful already...

"So, you're awake, you whore!"

The next second, a violent kick in my stomach radiates pain through me. I gasp for air, unable to breathe, struggling. Before I can come to my senses, I feel someone stomping brutally on my leg. I scream, unable to hold it. This is unbearable! I suddenly remember I was shot right there, and I can feel the blood running on my legs—a sharp, shrilling pain where the bullet is still located. My own voice screams in my ears, and I can only hear half of what he's saying.

"...should have died... What you... Lost everything because of Black... Pay for it..."

I don't care, I don't care about anything that bastard says. I ignore him and bite my lip, unable to take the pain. His foot on my leg is crushing me, pressing so hard until I hear something actually breaking, and a new wave of pain takes me out.

I wake up again, and there's a taste of blood in my mouth. I'm alive... But still in pain, too. Is he gone? I try to move, but Moon Goddess, my leg... It still hurts so much; I can barely believe I was unconscious with this pain. And this cold, too. I'm shaking. Oh, Moon Goddess, my stomach, too... Marcus is crazy and even more dangerous. Next time, he might really kill me... How long have I been there? Are they looking for me? I can't even reach out to anyone; whatever he gave me is strong enough to keep my inner wolf in some sort of coma... I can barely stay awake, myself. I hear footsteps away and something glass-like breaking. It smells like... Alcohol. Is that whiskey?

“You... slut! You think they will ca-catch me? They can... nev... never get me! I'll send your... your corp... corpse back to him! B... Black should die, too!”

Moon Goddess, I can't see him, but he is so drunk... I try to move and feel broken glass under my fingers. Crap, this is so dangerous... I need to do something to get out of here. How do I make him talk?

“Wh... Why Damian? He did nothing to... you,” I mutter, almost unable to talk.

“Black, t-took everything from me! He took my... my dignity! A s-slut like you is just... j-just a whore!”

Whatever he's saying doesn't make any sense, but I don't care. I feel him getting closer, and I try to move or crawl away, anyway I can. I feel sharp little pieces of glass pierce my skin, but this is the least of my problems right now. Moon Goddess, he reeks of alcohol!

"Stay away from me!"

"You scared? You should be my toy! You..."

"I'm no one's toy! Get the fuck away from me, you rapist!"

I suddenly hear him laugh, and a new kick bursts my stomach with pain. Moon Goddess... I don't know how much longer I can take this.

"Rapist? After what you did to me? You whore! Assassin! S-slut! You almost kill... killed me!"

...Killed him? I try to remember it again. It's so cloudy in my memories... Gosh, Nora, come on, remember... That night, in that apartment... Alec left me with him, and... He tried to touch me. A surge of fear invades me when I recall, but I have to fight this. I have Damian now. I'm fine, I'm fine. I can do this.

I remember the struggle. Marcus' hideous breath on me, his greasy hands on my legs. Him trying to tear my dress away. I fought him, I screamed,

even. I remember the echo of my own voice. At one point, I think I hit him hard enough for him to let go for a second. That's right, I remember now. I pushed him with all I had and ran. I didn't recall where the entrance was, but I went to... Was it a kitchen? I saw those... I saw knives on the counter.

I took one, I remember that feeling between my hands. My fingers clenching on it. It was a long and large kitchen knife, very sharp. When Marcus came at me, I didn't have a second for hesitation. Just panic, guiding each of my movements.

My arms went forward until something blocked me. A weird sensation. A gasp and cold air running down my spine. I remember Marcus' face, frozen in a shocked expression. A whimper of pain, something so miserable and ridiculous. I didn't let go of the knife. I couldn't. As if my fingers were a part of it. So, I stepped back, keeping it with me, in front of me to defend myself, the blade drenched in red.

He screamed. In pain, in terror. I was still scared and panicked. I thought I was going to die, all of me was trembling. I couldn't see the injury, just his face. Like I was in a trance. He ran at me, and I raised my hands, trying to protect myself, forgetting what I was holding on to. I wanted to scream, but even my voice was muffled.

The blade went along his face, in a red, vivid, gross line.

I stabbed him, scarred him twice.

...Is it the reason he's not approaching me now? I try to think again, hard. Marcus had no problem touching me before, but he only used his feet this time. Is he...? Wait. More memories come back again.

“Don't you approach me! Don't touch me!”

I screamed that. I screamed that with all my might... With my Alpha voice. I just remembered it, but for him, it was... An order.

That's right. Marcus can't touch me. Moreover, I'm an Alpha, and he's nothing but a renegade now. His wolf has to obey me. He can't control me anymore.

“You little slut, you...”

“Shut up.”

“Don't tell me to shut up!”

I don't have my Alpha voice right now. Moon Goddess, what did he drug me with? Enough to keep my wolf unconscious! I have to hold on, to stay alive. Until I can wake her up, or they can find me, some way. I breathe

in. Gosh, my head is spinning so hard... I can faint at any moment again, and I hate that.

Marcus keeps insulting me, but I don't listen to him anymore. The worst he can do is kick me, and as long as I don't anger him, he should stay away... Or so I hope.

Damian, Damian... Moon Goddess, please let him be fine. I hope he can make it, at least until I get back to him...

I'm fighting to stay awake. My head is so heavy... I can feel his presence, somewhere in the darkness of that room. He is mumbling something, reeking of alcohol. That monster. I try to keep my eyes open; I look for my wolf. What happened to her? Marcus must have drugged me again because I can't feel her at all. How many hours have passed?

Besides my wolf, I'm scared because I can't feel my bond with Damian anymore. Moon Goddess, I hope he is okay. I miss him so much already... Why did I ever think this could be only a wolf thing? I love him. I love him so much, so, so much...

The memories of our time together, in his bed, warm my heart. His arms around me, his fingers caressing my skin... The way he stares at me, with his silver eyes filled with tenderness. His firm kisses, the spiky beard he kept because I told him I liked it...

Moon Goddess, I miss him.

I need to find a way to get back to him. I open my eyes again, trying to find Marcus, but without my wolf, it's too hard. That psychopath can go mad at any minute. He is staying away for now, but his kick earlier was not mere luck; he may try to go at it again and kill for good in the process. No way I'm letting him get close to me.

My wolf, I need my wolf...

I try to remember what Elena taught me. Tonia taught me how to fight, but Elena was the one to give me the clues to get closer to my inner wolf. She compared it to seeing myself in a mirror, reaching out for differences in my own reflection. My inner wolf is a reflection of myself, but getting to her is... No, she has to be there somewhere.

I need to reach her, in my... subconsciousness. I think I need to get unconscious again, that might help... Like some hypnosis. It might work.

It's not too hard. I've been fighting this urge to sleep all along, but what I am worried most is... will I wake up again after that? I feel the pain in my stomach and the blood drying on my leg. I'm self-aware of my current state. Alec beat me before, but never this badly. I know this might be my last time closing my eyes, but... This is my only chance to find my wolf and reunite with Damian. I have to.

It only takes a few seconds. I fall into a slumber...

In a white room, I'm sitting in front of a great mirror. I breathe in and approach it slowly. Why is it that I have two reflections? On my right is my wolf, standing proudly, her perfect white fur shiny brightly. I walk towards her, but when I get close, she suddenly starts growling furiously. I can't approach her? Why is she rejecting me? I... Wait, is this really my wolf? She... Something feels wrong about her. The scar! I realize she doesn't have my scar on her left eye. She is perfect, her sapphire blue eyes glaring at me. She's different but... I still feel she is my wolf. I try to get close again, but she growls, warning me not to come closer. She will really attack, so I step back.

I turn to look at the other reflection. This isn't a wolf... I take a few steps closer. It's a little girl, curled up, hiding her face in her arms. It's as if she's crying, yet I can't hear any sound coming from her. I approach, and she lifts her face. She's... me. Me, when I was a child. I stare at all her bruises, cuts. She looks just like I used to, malnourished and weak. Her hair is a mess, and the scar on her face is slowly bleeding.

"Who are you?" She asks.

"I am you."

She shakes her head. "You can't be me."

“I am you, in the future, I think.”

“I don’t have a future,” she whimpers.

“You do. You are... my past.”

“Wrong.”

She’s not? But she looks exactly like what I used to look like... I turn around, and the wolf is glaring at us, still growling. So, I address the little girl again.

“Who are you?” I ask

She shrugs.

“Who are you?” She asks.

“I...”

How do I answer that?

“My name is Nora.”

“You’re just a name?”

“No, I am... a werewolf, too.”

She stares at me in disbelief. What else can I say? Who am I...? Does she mean my past or my identity? My family? What do I do?

“I am you,” I say.

“You’re not me!” She yells.

“I am your future.”

“I don’t have a future.”

“You do,” I insist.

“I can’t. I’m dead, you know.”

She... wait, what? I shake my head. “You are not dead! You’re just... The past, my past.”

“No, I’m the one you killed. Look at me. You’re not me anymore. So, I’m dead.”

What she says is right, in some way, but... Why doesn’t it feel right? I look at her again. The fresh cut on her face... Is she me from when I was seven, after my parents’ death? It’s when Alec and I lived in the slums...

“...I’m sorry,” I whisper.

This time, she looks surprised. “Sorry?”

“Yes. Because I should have been stronger.”

“I’m not strong... I’m hungry,” She frowns.

I remember. Every day was a struggle back then. We didn’t find enough for both of us to eat and went many days without having anything. I hate those memories... Striving to survive, looking for scraps among the trash... My scar, too, probably wouldn’t have been so wide and visible if it had been appropriately treated.

“It gets better,” I say.

“Not for me. I’ll stay here, hungry. I’ve always been here.”

I don't get it. Isn't she a memory...? Why is she there, why would my wolf show me that? I turn to look at the white wolf again. She is glaring. Is she another memory, too? I never was in that form without a scar... What is she, then? I turn to my younger self again.

“Why don't you go to the wolf?”

“What wolf?”

She can't see her? I point to the wolf's direction, but she just looks confused. Why can't she see her? Oh right, I couldn't feel my wolf yet back then... Is this the reason? What can I do? There is no food here.

“What do you need then?” I ask.

She suddenly starts crying. “You should know! Why don't you give it to me!”

I shake my head, helpless. “I don't have any food...”

“I don't want food! I don't care about food! You never give it to me!” She cries, tears overflowing.

She doesn't want food? She said she was hungry! I look at her crying, lost at what to do. What is it she wants, then? I don't have anything. Behind us, the wolf is calmly sitting down, staring at everything I do. Is she waiting for something too...?

The little girl keeps crying, but I have no clue what she wants... What did I want back then? I was only starving... Day after day, it's only a blur now. I was lost after my parents' death, and Alec suddenly closed himself to me; I was all alone.

I was so lonely... I look down at her, and all of a sudden, my emotions go back to who I was. I start crying, too, my heart breaking from that loneliness. It was so hard... Cold, hungry, and lonely. There was no one to help me.

I crouch down facing her, and start caressing her hair gently. "It's going to be okay... We will make friends later. We will have so many people around us, you'll see! Damian, Liam, Nate, Bobo, Tonia..."

"You're lying!"

"No, I'm not! I promise. We have so many people caring for us in the future."

"It can't be. No one wants me."

“You...”

She won't believe me. Why would she? I never believed anyone would want me back then. Suddenly, I feel awfully lonely, too. I want Damian... I want him to take me in his arms.

“I hate you,” she says.

“I'm sorry...”

“You hate me, too!”

“I don't hate you!”

She keeps glaring at me. She's wrong, I don't hate her... I don't hate my past. I learned to live with it, even the worst of it, even the saddest memories. What is she craving then?

Suddenly, I realize. I was so lonely back then, I had no one. No one wanted me, no one loved me. ...Not even myself. I stare at her again. She's the me I never loved—the weak, pitiful me. I remember Damian's words... He said it's okay for me to be scared, and it's okay for me to be sad. Did I ever allow myself to cry like this as a child? I convinced myself I had to

be quiet... I had to live as if I was invisible. Alec convinced me I didn't deserve anything. Even worse, I convinced myself of that too.

I bow down and hug the little child against me. I caress her hair, trying to think of how I wanted a simple hug back then.

"I'm sorry... I'm sorry I didn't even love myself. I will learn, I promise. Forgive me."

She starts crying again, bawling out while holding on to me too. The more she cries, the more relieved I feel. Behind her, I look at the wolf, not wanting to go to her anymore. That wolf isn't me. She is the one I've always wanted to be—the perfect, fearless, beautiful, and strong white wolf.

I am not perfect, and I will never be. It's like Damian said. I have to allow myself to be weak sometimes and to cry, too. I have to learn to rely on others and to have faith in my friends. I need to accept their love and love myself. I don't need to be a perfect Luna for Damian. He probably wouldn't love me if I was. I think he said it before. He loves how fragile I can be and how I make him doubt and wonder. I can be that girl. I can be... me.

"Thank you..."

As she whispers that, she suddenly vanishes from my arms, and a wave of warmth washes over me. I glance at the wolf again. This time, she has changed. My scar is there. She looks a bit thinner too, and not as mighty as before. Now, she's my wolf. That's the real me.

She gently walks to me, and I pat her.

"Sorry I didn't listen to you earlier... And sorry I wasn't gentler with myself... With us."

She puts her head under my arm, and I keep caressing her for a while before she retreats to look me in the eye.

"We need to go back now... To Damian. I need your strength."

She nods, and we put our foreheads against each other. I finally feel her... All of her. As if I had only been hearing an echo all this time. This is me; this is my wolf. She starts growling, louder and louder. I feel a rise of power, something strong and beautiful coming from within.

I wake up to Marcus' yelling.

"What are you doing? You slut..."

I suddenly get up. I don't know where I get the strength to. I am a she-wolf, I am her. I growl, ready to attack.

Marcus grabs his gun, but I jump first. I go for his wrist and bite it as hard as I can. His screaming echoes through the walls, but I don't care. If I back off now, I'll be dead. I bite again, and again, and again while he swears and struggles. Blood flows down all sides. I hear a gunshot, and suddenly he stops moving.

I stop and let go. What a scene... I'm not sure if I killed him or if he unintentionally shot himself, but... Marcus is dead for good. His revulsed eyes and open injuries are gruesome, and I stumble away from it. I struggle to shape-shift back for what feels like an eternity. My body has gone past its limits. My leg is so painful... and I can barely see anything. I try to find my dress in the dark and clumsily put on whatever's left of it. I'm tottering to the door. I feel so horribly sick; every step is a fight in itself. I use all of my weight to push against it, and while doing so, notice something bright bouncing on my shoulders.

Moon Goddess, is that... my own hair? I turned completely white! I check again, doubting my eyes, but every dark curl has really turned into a pure white, like my wolf's fur. What is this? I don't notice any other changes in this darkness, but my hair is almost glowing. I will wonder later— I need to get out of here...

I finally open the door and fall into what looks like the inside of a cabin... It's barely enough for one person, but Marcus made this place a mess. And it reeks of drugs, too. I ignore it, and fight to stay awake, use what strength I have left to make it to the door.

When I finally open it, I see a silhouette running to me.

“Nora!”

I don't really understand what is going on around me. I think my legs just gave up. I hear steps running to me, and scrawny hands grab my arms. It takes me a few seconds to recognize that face, those shivering hands holding me.

“Oh, Moon Goddess, no, no... I'm so sorry, Nora... Forgive me, please...”

“...Alec?”

I want to push him away, get away from my brother. What is he doing here? Instead, I feel him hugging me. I don't have any strength left to push him away...I lose balance.

“You have to hold on... Nora...”

I hear his voice. Calling my name, again and again.

“I’m sorry... I promise I’ll do things right, this time. I’ll save you...”

Everything is blurry, and I’m so tired... I fight to stay awake, but I know myself how bad my state must be at that moment.

Why him? Why would my brother come to save me, of all people? How did he even get here...?

I smell him, but it’s different from before. Something has changed. I can feel he’s skinnier under his ragged clothes, too... I close my eyes for a second and struggle to open them again.

“You have to stay awake... I’ll get you there...”

“A... Alec...?” I manage to whisper.

“Nora? You’re awake? Y-You must hold on, I... I’ll bring you there, and...”

Alec? Why would Alec save me? Am I dreaming again? Is this really my brother? I’m so confused... His hair’s longer. His voice’s raspier than I remember... What happened to him?

“I’m so sorry, Nora... When I heard he had you... I knew... I knew I had to come and...”

He keeps talking, most of it doesn’t even make sense, and... I’m too tired... I struggle for a bit, but the darkness wins again...