

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 121

Lily's pov

I woke up on my back, blinking slowly to register my surroundings, the unfamiliar ceiling fading in and out of focus.

My head felt heavy, my vision sluggish, my heart strained. My heart was a frightened bird, lodged in my chest and trying to take flight.

I was in an unfamiliar room, a beautiful room with lavender walls, sky fall ceilings and a lot of fresh flowers.

I struggled to remember why panic was slowly building in my chest. Why my sensors were picking up on the distinct threat of danger...

And then it came crushing back to me.

I have been kidnapped for the second time in my life.

I blinked away the sluggish grogginess from my eyes, trying to roll over, my heavy thick dark hair falling over my face as I squinted in the direction of the rising sun.

The first thing that I noticed as I slowly opened my eyes into the unfamiliar surroundings was the scent of the place. It smelled exactly like the perfume that I used and I could literally feel the lavender and roses on my tongue, but even though the place smelled like it could be my bedroom, it was not. Far from that, it could never even be my bedroom.

Above me, on the ceiling, shooting stars had been drawn all over it and if it wasn't that I slowly remembered what had happened that had landed me here, I would have lost myself in those perfectly painted shapes.

Aiden.

Speaking of Aiden, where was he?

"Good morning."

I gasped.

Speak of the devil.

He was sitting in an armchair across from me, his face the picture of perfect calm. He was wearing black pants and a black T-shirt that clung to the shape of his body. His hair was perfect as always.

If I didn't know the monster that lurked beneath that handsome face both literally and figuratively, I would have probably been carried away by the sheer magnificence of him as he folded his arms that bulged and threatened to rip open the black tee that he was wearing.

"How're you feeling?" He asked with a softer expression than I expected. "You had me worried for a minute that I had knocked you out too hard."

Terror licked through my skin but I didn't want to give him the satisfaction of seeing me terrified.

"Where am I?"

"This is my home. You must be hungry. I'll get something prepared for you." He paused. "Are you thirsty?"

"Y- you kidnapped me."

"An astute observation. Now, what would you like to eat? Do you have any particular preference?"

"Go to hell, Aiden." I whispered, watching as his lips lifted up in a smile that told me that I might have as well just gone ahead to compliment him and I growled low in my throat.

Sitting up, I tried to hop off the bed and realized with horror that my wrists were chained.

The chains rattled as I tugged hard on them, I had been chained to the wall beside the bed, the chains rattling on both my hands and feet as I tried to move.

"What the hell is this?" I snapped at him but he just shrugged and gestured towards the entire room.

"What do you think about the room?" He asked as if expecting praise. "Is it to your liking? I tried to whip something up very quickly given the short notice I

had before having to bring you here, so if there is anything that you don't like, please let me know, but overall I think I did a good job in such a short time."

I gaped at him in shock and rage. He must have completely lost it.

He looked like he was actually proud of what he was saying and I wondered if screaming was the way forward, since it seemed like he was choosing to ignore that he was keeping me captive here against my will.

Taking my shocked silence for recalcitrance, he clapped his hands together with delight.

"If you have no complaints, it means that you really do like it. If you don't though, it can always be fixed. More importantly, would you like to join me downstairs in the theater to watch a movie later this evening? I mean I didn't want to ask like this. In fact, I had wanted to make the proposal something grand this morning before I was rudely interrupted by the news that I don't wish to relive at this moment."

I was starting to realize that Aiden talks a lot. He talks a lot of nonsense.

Before I could even respond and tell him he was out of his mind, his eyes brightened like he remembered something and his gaze found me again.

"Oh! And do you prefer darker colour arrangements or brighter ones? I mean I got the two for you since I didn't have the slightest idea what you like. We can fix that—"

"Oh, for f u c k sakes, Aiden. Quit it with the nonsense and just tell me why I am here and why I am chained to the wall like an animal!" I screamed, even as I tried again to rid myself of the chains, shaking them with the hope that by some miracle, they would just fall off my wrists, but all was to no avail and I glared at Aiden.

He frowned and narrowed his eyes at me, leaning forward to place his forearms on his knees and clasp his fingers together. "It'll only be for a little while, princess. At least until I'm sure that you won't try to escape."

I laughed bitterly and smirked at him. "You'd have no problem with me escaping, not when I could reject you and everyone can be happy." I replied, immediately opening my mouth to recite the words, but for some reason, it was stuck in my throat.

Frowning, I tried again but nothing happened. It felt like there was something lodged in my throat which prevented me from even speaking the words.

My heart started racing, pounding so hard in my ears, it's a wonder I haven't gone deaf.

"What in the world did you do to me?" I asked with a gasp and Aiden smirked, flexing his hands as tendrils of dark smoke curled around his fingers.

"You see, dearest, i had to use some black magic to make sure the threat of you rejecting me never happens again."

"Let me go, you psycho. You're out of your goddamn mind!" I yelled, writhing on the bed but his laugh was cold as he hared at me.

"I am only what you made me to be, Lily. I will not be letting go of you unless you agree to the mating bond. Unless you let me take what's mine."

"What's yours?" I erupted.

" Yes. A gift you stupidly and carelessly gave to my best friend. I'll have to get that fixed-"

"You should be glad!" I screamed, rattling my chains until I was too exhausted to move. "You hated me! You hurt me every chance you get-"

"Actions I am now ashamed of with every fiber of my being."

"You have one hell of a way of showing it." I gazed at my shackles, my throat tight.

I always knew Aiden was a spoiled prince with a temper problem that guarantees he always gets what he wants... but trapping me in beautiful room that might as well be a gilded cage, restricting my speech, placing shackles on my wrists and feet, like I'm some kind of exotic pet... it slowly started to hit me. Aiden doesn't know how to love. All he knows how to do is force people to do his bidding. He does not understand that love can't be bought, can't be forced.

Defeated, I shook my head, wondering how we had even gotten ourselves into this mess.

“This is not the way, Aiden.” I whispered quietly. ” This is not how to win my heart.”

The look on his face quickly faded away to my surprise, his face quiet and contemplative.

He leaned in closer. “Will you tell me how, Lily? How do I win your heart? How do I do it right?”

His voice was calm but I could see the desperation in his eyes as he asked me that question and those earnest eyes made me almost want to imagine a world where Aiden had not been the mastermind beyond my bullying and I the weak victim.

If we had met under different circumstances, would I have been able to see myself falling for someone like Aiden Vanderbilt?

Would I have allowed him to court me if he had a different personality?

Shaking my head, I blew out a harsh breath and shook my head.

“If I have to tell you, then it won’t be authentic now, would it?” I answered coldly and Aiden growled, rising to his feet.

He walked towards me and sat on the bed beside me, reaching out to take my face in his hands but I flinched.

He snatched his hands back, a dark expression washing over his face. He rose to his feet and paced about before settling back his gaze back on me.

“Seeing you here in my home is the only thing stopping me from hunting Ren down and making him pay for daring to covet what’s mine. If you care about the boy you love, behave yourself and desist from even having thoughts of him. In the meantime, make yourself at home.”

I looked at my chains, then at the large window to my left big enough to escape from.

He discovered my thoughts easily. “I assure you, you won’t be leaving until I allow it. And don’t even dream of anyone coming to save you. I have given orders for our borders to be warded. No one can go in or out, not unless I will it.”

He rose to his feet and started towards the door.

My heart squeezed. I was hyperventilating. Trapped. I let out a pained sound that had him faltering in his steps.

He was already at the door before he paused, a hand on the door handle. “Unfortunately , the chains are not coming off anytime soon.”

He left before he could see the tears dribbling down my cheeks, slamming the door hard. The only sounds left belonged to the air conditioning and my broken heart.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 122

Aiden’s pov

“There is nothing you can do, Aiden. It’s too late for any of that. It’s too late for everything.”

“If I have to tell you, then, it won’t be authentic now, would it?”

“Let me go, you psycho! You’re out of your goddamn mind!”

“This is not the way to win my heart”

Was there even a way to win her heart when Lily has already said it was too late?

Did that mean that she might have considered being with me if our lives hadn’t crossed each other the way it did?

I was grasping on to straws at this point, trying to look for anything to make myself feel better but nothing was working and my nerves had gotten the better of me as I sat dejected at the foot of my bed, absentmindedly playing with the ring box in my hand.

I snapped it open, picked out the ring with a diamond band and jade green rock in the middle to match her eyes. I brought it to the light and squinted at it.

Sighing, I put the ring back in the box, snapped it shut.

It was so upsetting how everything was going because the last thing I had expected from myself after everything I had planned was for my relationship with Lily to get even worse and it felt immensely horrible to know that no matter what I did, it seemed that it was always the wrong thing to do.

There was a knock on the door and a maid walked in and stood beside the exit, bowing low in greeting before she spoke.

“She has refused to eat lunch as well, my prince.”

I gritted my teeth, tightening my hand around the ringbox.

“Permit me to speak out of turn but she skipped dinner last night as well as breakfast this morning. And with the rate at which she’s going, she may starve herself to death. Not that it is what I hope will happen, of course.” She said, her voice hesitant and faltering.

I hated that she was right and I stopped myself from lashing out at her for speaking because she was not responsible for what was happening right now. I was.

And if Lily was really not eating, I needed to do something about it fast. I didn’t bring her here to get her killed for goodness sake.

I raked my hand through my hair. “Send for Maya. Tell her that I want to see her.” I replied and she nodded, bowing again before leaving the room and I fought the urge to slam my fist on the table in anger.

I wanted Lily to trust me, to want me, to choose me. But all she wanted to do was leave. And she was willing to even starve herself to death to achieve that goal. That hurt as hell.

No one wants you, Aiden. You nearly got our mother killed. That’s why she can’t stand to look at your face.

I gasped as that distant memory crept back to life but before I could give it much thought, my door pushed open again and Maya walked in without bothering to knock.

A frown was etched into her wrinkled face, her gaze was cold even though she bowed in greeting, her lips in a rigid line at the spot beside me, refusing to look me in the eyes.

I knew that it meant she was disappointed in me which was a new low for me because she was hardly ever disappointed. She was upset of course but never had she been unable to look me in the eye even when I was at my worst.

But then, I hadn't said a word to her and had kidnapped my mate and was holding her hostage. It wouldn't matter if I told her that Lily was my mate because kidnapping my mate and forcing her to live with me was not exactly something to be proud of.

Why make a bad situation already worse?

"I called you here because I have concerns. My guest has refused to eat and I think that should be blamed on someone, don't you think so? Anyways, fire the chef and hire someone else that can cook something that she will actually like."

Eyes finally meeting mine but filled with horrified shock, Maya immediately shook her head.

"Pedro has served this household for thirty five years! And he has been nothing but excellent, Aiden. Surely you can reconsider your decision."

"Well, he's not s**t if he can't even prepare a meal that my guest would want to eat."

"Perhaps that is not Pedro's fault and you should look to other reasons why your guest is refusing to touch her meals?" Her answer was filled with accusation and I rose to my feet, glaring at her as a growl escaped my mouth that shocked her and made her bow her head, avoiding my eyes.

"Forgive my overstepping, Aiden but can I suggest that you have dinner with her instead? Perhaps she would fare better if she had some company."

My mood brightened instantly, seeing her point and I wondered why I never thought of it.

I snapped my finger, the idea taking root in my head. "Have a maid inform Lily that I'll be having dinner with her this evening."

"Yes, I will send a message out for that."

“Thank you. I should prepare.” I said, trying to contain my excitement, my thoughts already swirling with what to wear but when I turned around, Maya was still standing there with a disappointed frown on her face and I raised my eyebrows in confusion.

“You’re still here.”

“Yes.”

“Will you get whatever you want to say off your chest so I can go and change into something else?”

“Who is your guest?”

It was my turn to turn my back and avoid her suspicious gaze. “She’s my mate. The girl I told you about.”

“Why do you have your mate in chains, Aiden? Why is she here against her will?”

“Oh for the love of God, things didn’t work out the way I planned. Ren marked her before I had a chance to even try to speak to her and I had to do something. I had to, Maya.” I snapped, turning around to glare at her, but this time, Maya did not look away from me and her eyes widened with shock before they turned sad.

“Aiden, if she has already been marked by another, you need to let her go.”

“Not. Another. Word, Maya.” I growled but she shook her head and raised her hand, stopping me.

“You need to let her go now, Aiden. She has to spend at least three days with her bonded after being marked by him and taking her away when she is still in her nesting period could have adverse effects on her. I have known women that have died from being separated from their bonded too early and if there’s any good in your heart, you need to let her go. You need to let her go to Ren now or you will never forgive yourself if she dies thanks to your bloody stubbornness.”

There was silence in my room, but in my head, Nyx was roaring in rage.

“Leave.” I said coldly. “And if you ever speak out of turn to me again, I will not forgive you or let it slide.” A deep exhale that did nothing to calm the raging inferno in my blood. “Do you understand?”

“As you wish, Mr Vanderbilt.” She replied with a bow and it felt like a slap to my cheek because Maya never referred to me like that, thanks to the close relationship we had.

I had succeeded in pushing her away as well, I thought as I watched her walk out of my room and the door closed after her.

I growled, hating the fact that I suspected her words were true and it only meant that I would lose Lily. I can’t lose her, and I can’t let her go either.

Why did the universe want this? Why was everything and everyone trying to tear Lily away from me?

Pacing the room angrily, I fought the urge to scream but it seemed that fate wanted me to suffer even more because my phone rang and when I checked it, it was Ren. He had been blowing up my phone for the past few days and even though I lowkey enjoyed the thought that the absence of his bonded was tormenting him as much as the refusal of my mate tormented me, this time, it had the opposite effect on me.

Maya’s words replayed in my head as I stared at my phone, my rage and hurt mounting by the second and I picked the phone up and flung it across the room to the standing mirror, letting out a furious roar as the phone shattered to pieces, destroying the mirror in the process.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 123

Lily’s pov

I have experienced the different stages of grief in the past... twenty four hours? Three days? Five weeks? I wasn’t even sure what day it was or how long I’ve been here.

Currently, I was stuck in a depressive phase.

After Aiden had left me with nothing but no hint that he was ever going to release me, I had first gone into denial, hoping that if I went back to sleep, I would wake up back in Zac’s music room because facing Zac was a whole lot

better than having to be trapped with Aiden in what I realized was the dark and dreaded Vanderbilt mansion.

After his parents died, the Vanderbilts had stopped receiving visitors in the mansion and the giant dark walls were more menacing looking, giving a dark, spooky vibe that warned people to stay out.

Knowing that I was inside did not give me any comfort and when I had woken up again still chained to the bed, denial had turned into anger. And then I had tried to bargain with the maid who had brought me my meals to release me but that was also a dead end, so here I was, staring up at the ceiling, feeling like I was about to drown under the weight of a fever as well as depression.

My head felt like a tonne of bricks, like it was about to fall off my shoulders and when I raised it to see who had come in, the maid who had been bringing me meals, all of which I returned back without even taking a bite, smiled at me, her hands empty this time and I wondered what she had been sent to do now.

“Good day, miss. Sorry to bother you again. I’m here to tell you that the young master sent me to assist you to prepare for dinner with him.”

Well, well, my captor wanted to eat with me. Wasn’t that wonderful?

He probably wanted to see my face to be sure that I was as miserable as he felt.

“I won’t be eating dinner” I replied simply, burrowing deeper into the covers and as usual, I expected her to nod and go away but this time, she rushed to fall on her knees beside the bed, bowing her head low and her hands trembling as she rested her fists on her thighs.

“Please, you must not send me away. If I go back without you, I will be punished.”

I sat up, ready to tell her that she could tell Aiden to come to me so I could tell him in person to f**k off but my eyes widened in horror as I looked at the maid’s skin from where her shirt had dropped slightly from her shoulders and saw the beginning of a bruise, induced by whips, peeking from her back.

“How did you get those?” I asked and she gasped when she looked up at me and saw what I was looking at, shaking her head anxiously instead of answering my question.

“Please, we must hurry. The master is not a very patient man.”

“Aiden?” I asked, to be very certain that I wasn’t hallucinating this entire evening and all the blood seemed to bleed from her face at the mention of his name and she rose to her feet and started helping me get out of the chains, her movements fidgety and manic.

When she released my wrists, I grabbed her arm and forced her to look at me and all I could see in her eyes was terror.

“Please don’t ask me any more questions about the master. ” Her voice broke towards the end and I nodded immediately, hoping she would see that and relax.

“I won’t.” I reassured her, completely repulsed by the fact that Aiden would whip his own workers, but I held my tongue and decided to cooperate.

I didn’t want to bring her any harm. I knew first hand what Aiden was like when he doesn’t get what he wants.

“So where are we going?” I asked her as I got down from the bed and massaged my wrists.

“The closet so that you can pick out a dress.” She answered, gesturing towards a large double door in the room.

I hadn’t even bothered to open the closet whenever the maid came to release me so that I could get my bathroom break and even though I had showered, I refused to wear anything other than the uniform that I had on since the day Aiden kidnapped me. I refused to give him any satisfaction whatsoever.

But when the maid opened the doors to the walk in closet, my mouth fell open in shock. This was the type of thing that you could only find in movies but here I was in a closet that was bursting with clothes of different vivid colours, styles and materials that looked so soft, I was scared to touch them. The sizes on the labelled clothes are almost too perfect and that was when it hit me that this closet was for me.

“Who does this place belong to?” I asked, refusing to believe that Aiden had gone to his length while I was unconscious but the maid shrugged.

“It’s for you, miss. Everything in the room, including the closet and everything in it belongs to you.”

Still shocked, I decided to take a closer look at some of the dresses and immediately became disappointed because almost all of the clothes here were not my style. Some were too uncomfortable, while others were either too thin, too revealing, prioritizing fashion over comfort. Even the pyjamas... Aiden must think I go to sleep looking like a sultry model on the cover of a playboy magazine.

It was just another clear sign that he didn’t even have the slightest idea who I was and from this closet, he didn’t care to know. This entire freak show was a clear indication that he just thought he could gorge me with flashy and expensive things and have me falling for him.

Knowing that turning around and going back to bed was not an option even though my head was pounding and my heart was hurting from missing Ren, I decided to pick out a sleeveless black, bodycon mermaid tail dress that flared out around my knees and glittered under the light, pairing it with very low nude slippers and nodded for the maid that I was done.

Quickly showering, I walked out and was about to start dressing up when the maid offered to take off my necklace and bracelet.

“There’s some jewelry in the closet too that would go with your outfit.” She suggested but I shook my head immediately.

“I’m fine with what I’m wearing.” My tone gave no room for argument and she nodded. I couldn’t part with the necklace and bracelet because they were gifts from Zac and Ren and I didn’t even know when I would see them again.

Remembering the fact that I had somehow lost Ren’s hoodie and scarf that I had been wearing when I fled from the music room, I turned to look at the maid, who had now told me her name was Sonya while she helped me brush my hair.

“Sonya, can I have the clothes I came with?” I asked, describing the hoodie and scarf to her.

“Clothes?” She asked, big brown eyes wide in shock. “Oh! The master took them away, but if you’re worried about getting cold, you don’t have to be because your room has a heating system and a thermostat that can adjust the temperature to you liking...”

I sighed, tuning her out and decided to just ask Aiden at dinner.

Rubbing my temples, I realized that the restlessness and fever that I had been feeling for a while now was getting worse. I had thought it was because I was kidnapped but this felt like more. Like something was missing and I needed to get back to be able to function.

“Let’s go.” Sonya said and as she let me down the halls, I tried to act like I was not intrigued by what I saw.

The entire mansion looked dark and soulless, despite its opulence and I had heard stories about it as a kid but seeing it now, so devoid of life despite being well furnished, I began to miss Ren’s home which radiated light and love that was welcoming to everyone. Even the workers here, the ones that passed by me and bowed in greeting looked colder and more rigid as if they were afraid to not be as stiff as gargoyles or face the consequences.

Guards were stationed at strategic places in the mansion, the entire place teeming with them. Somehow, I got the vibe that they were not here to keep intruders from coming in. They were here to keep us from going out.

The dining room was as large as a banquet hall and just as beautiful with silver silk spilling across the table and bouquets of flowers with luminous petals decorating the table in crystal vases. The ceiling was made of see through glass that showed the night sky outside and the moon shining overhead us and I stood and looked up, breathless by the sight of it, starstruck and enchanted, momentarily forgetting that I was here as a prisoner, not a guest.

“Lily.”

Aiden’s voice brought me back to reality and when I looked down, I saw him rise at the sight of me, his smile bright and surprisingly genuine like he was really happy to see me.

“Do you like the it? I hoped you would enjoy gazing at the stars as much as I do. I thought eating out here would put you in a better mood.” His voice held a

hint of desperation and I realized that he was really hoping I did so that he could share something in common with me.

I wanted to tell him that it was a lovely view but I remembered that he was same person that put me in chains and I shut my mouth and settled for a nod.

Looking at the table, I saw that it had already been set for two people and Sonya gently squeezed my hand.

“Go to him.” I didn’t know if that squeeze was meant to soothe her or me but I was grateful for it and I walked towards where he had pulled out the chair closest to him and sat down, allowing him to gently push the chair closer to the table.

“You look beautiful.” He whispered as one of the maids walked over to serve my meal and I would have probably given him a witty response if I was not so focused on the maid serving my drink as she trembled so hard, I was certain the wine jug would slip from her hand.

I noticed an old, grey haired woman that I had seen earlier when she came to my room once with Sonya, staring at me with a sad expression on her face and the chef was standing beside her, sweating profusely as he anxiously watched me and I realized that he was waiting for me to take a bite out of my butter poached lobster.

He looked so scared, like his life was dependent on whatever I said after tasting his food and when I turned to Aiden, he seemed so unaffected and unaware of just how much terror he instilled in his workers and even me who sat beside him at the table.

Oblivious to the struggles of his staff and mine, he took a bite out of his food and I had to admit that he looked good sitting at the head of the table in a black tux that would have made me forget that he was more than just a handsome face.

I wondered just how long Aiden was going to keep me here against my will and how long it would be before I became as soulless, scared and withdrawn as the workers here.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 124

Aiden’s pov

My heart nearly stopped in my chest when the doors to the dining room opened and Lily walked in after the maid that I had assigned to her. She was wearing one of my mother's reconstructed dresses of all the things that I had selected specifically for her in her closet.

I hoped she would like her new things, as fun as it was putting it together for her, I wanted to see the delight on her face when she wore them.

She had chosen the stunning black, bodycon sleeveless mermaid tail dress that hugged her curves in all the right places. The sight took my breath away. It was as if the world had slowed down, and she was the only thing that mattered in that moment.

The dress was a perfect choice for her, accentuating her graceful figure and making her stand out in the entire room like a beacon and as she moved, the fabric flared out around her knees, adding a touch of elegance to her every step. It was like watching a real-life mermaid gracefully navigating the waters.

It shimmered and sparkled under the lights, creating a mesmerizing effect that made it almost impossible for me to look at her and when she paused to look up at the stars, her lips slightly parted in awe, I felt starstruck.

Has she always been this beautiful?

Her hair cascaded down her shoulders, adding to the allure of her look and her lips were a bold blood red that seemed to make a statement. It was one of those moments where words felt inadequate to describe the beauty before me. I couldn't help but feel a mix of awe and nervousness, as if I was in the presence of someone extraordinary.

I wanted to cup her face and kiss her. I wanted to tell her to ask for anything and I would grant it without hesitation. But it seems like the more I give her, the less I have of her.

But more than anything, I was just happy to be in her orbit.

However, it seemed that she didn't share the same excitement that I did to see her and up until when she sat beside me, I had to hold myself back to not say anything that I thought would set her off but she had been picking at her food for almost ten minutes since she sat down and it got me worried, especially because she had refused to eat anything last night and this plan

that was riding on the fact that she was going to eat if she wasn't in her bedroom was failing.

"Is the food not to your liking?" I finally asked and she paused before raising her head to glare at me.

"It is. It's just your presence I can't stand."

And then she looked back at her food and kept picking at it as I struggled to keep a tight leash on my anger and hurt from being so blatantly rejected in order to avoid looking my worst and giving her another reason to hate me.

"Well, you might not like my presence but you do like the food, so eat and no it's not a request."

She looked up at me with rage and looked like she was about to say something but stopped herself and started eating bit by bit.

The silence in the dining room was almost palpable and when my eyes caught Maya's, I could see that she didn't even bother to hide her disappointment anymore.

Suddenly feeling like the tie on my neck was too tight under such a heavy gaze, I yanked it off and wondered what I had done wrong this time. Was asking her to eat so bad? And would there ever even come a time when I would do something that was right in the eyes of everyone else for once in my life?

Why did it seem that no matter what I did, it was somehow bad and yet doing the right things seemed to come easy to everyone else?

Unable to stand being judged so heavily by Maya and knowing that she was not the only one who seemed to have something to say to me but was the least afraid, I felt annoyed and decided to send everyone else away except Lily.

"Everyone. Leave us. Lily, stay."

"Of course. Why would you ask your prized prisoner to leave? Don't you love me in chains."

“Get out, all of you!” I yelled and everyone quickly made themselves unavailable, leaving Lily and I alone in the large room that suddenly seemed small as I turned to face Lily who did not hide how upset she was.

It should have been unfair that even with a frown, she still looked drop dead gorgeous and the ring box in my pocket burned a hole through my slacks as I suddenly became lost for words.

“Lily...” I started but settled for just letting my actions do the talking and I ripped out the box and reached for her hand, placing the ring on her middle finger.

“Don’t take it off.” I snapped, my voice coming out harder than intended when she moved to remove the ring and I saw how her jaw tightened and her eyes darken with annoyance but she nodded slowly and that small action was like a beacon of hope.

Maybe I could somehow navigate through all of the wrongs I have done and somehow find a way to make things right. And maybe this was a start.

“Lily, I...”

“I would like the hoodie back and the scarf. They belong to Ren and I want to keep them with me.”

All of the sudden hope in my heart shattered like a tumbler and the small smile that was forming on my lips cracked.

“You can have all of the hoodies that you want if you are cold but you can’t have that one.”

“You don’t understand, Aiden-“

“I understand perfectly well.”

“No, you don’t! And you won’t even let me explain-“

“There is nothing to explain.”

” I need it.” Her voice trembled with a desperate need. “Please just give it to me-“

“NO!” I roared, unintentionally my shadows blasted out of me with a force that shattered the windows and glass ceiling.

It happened almost in slow motion before my eyes. One minute, Lily was pleading with me and the next, heavy shards of glass were raining down on us. Thick, heavy pieces that could hurt her.

Lily’s screams pierced through the angry, jealous haze that I was in and I sprung into action, throwing myself on top of her immediately, just as the glass shards descended on us and I gasped as the shards pierced through my suit, burying directly into my skin.

I winced at the pain slicing into my body, but it didn’t matter.

None of that mattered as long as Lily was safe.

When I was sure that nothing else was going to fall, I let go of her slowly, kneeling in front of her, my heart stuttering in my chest when I saw a tiny s***h on her forehead and terror in her leaking eyes.

Oh no. Oh no. Oh no. oh no.

“I didn’t mean to.” I whispered hoarsely, reaching for her face, and for the first time in a long time, I felt tears well up in my eyes when she moved away from me as I tried to touch her. She looked at me like I was a monster and this was the first time since my parents died that I wanted desperately for someone to believe that I wasn’t.

Feeling like throwing up and drenched in shame, I slowly rose to my feet and looked away, unable to face her.

“Someone will come for you.”

And before she could reply, I walked out of the dining room, shards of glass lodged in my back and with a heart that bled with sorrow.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 125

Lily’s pov

I had seen Aiden look hurt many times in the last couple of days by my actions and words and had felt either absolutely nothing some times, or sick satisfaction other times.

Not today though. Not right now. Nothing could have prepared me for the agony in his gaze when he realized what he had done and it was that look in his eyes when I recoiled from him that made me actually realize that truly the glass shattering from everywhere had been a mistake.

I felt nothing but guilt lodge in my chest as I watched him limp out of the hall with giant glass shards stuck in his back and back of his legs, leaving a trail of blood as he exited the room.

Tears trickled down my cheeks in horror because he had taken the brunt of the glass shards to protect me. It surprised me that I was worried for him and I opened my mouth to tell him to stop, so that I could assist him to the nearest medical facility but when I opened my mouth, nothing came out and I was left to watch him disappear out of the dining room, only to be replaced by the older woman who had been standing beside the chef at the beginning of dinner.

Maya was her name, I remembered that she had said it to me once and she was the only one who had shown something different from terror and fear that I had seen in the eyes of the other servants that lives in this mansion.

“Come on, child. Let’s get you on your feet.” Maya said, as she quickly looked all over my body and grabbed my arm to pull me up from the ground and now that I was on my feet I could finally see the severity of the damage that had been caused by Aiden’s unintentional burst of power.

The fact that Aiden had thrown himself immediately over me to protect me was still startling to me as Maya led me down the hallway to my bedroom and she rushed into my closet and came out with a first aid kit, I was yet reminded of Aiden again and wondered who was tending to him right now.

“Is Aiden going to be okay?” I asked as Maya tended to my forehead wound and the woman just let out a tired sigh and shrugged which did nothing for my anxiety.

“Aiden never seeks out anybody’s help even when he’s standing at death’s gate. He’ll be fine.”

Horrified, I sat up straighter and held her hand when she reached forward again to clean the cut on my forehead just above my left brow, more worried than before.

“He limped out of the dining room. Glass was embedded all over his back. You saw the blood when you came in, so please tell me that he’s already receiving medical attention.”

Maya gave me a straight look that told me she wasn’t teasing about her last statement.

Her weathered gaze was piercing with the intensity all night shade werewolves seemed to have in their eyes. “Unless we want to cart away dead bodies in body bags all night, you shouldn’t make such a suggestion. Nobody tends to Aiden when he has an injury and it has been that way since I can remember . The only person he allowed the privilege to tend to his injuries used to be Ren, but he and Ren have not been on the best of terms lately.” She paused and I looked away, suddenly feeling ashamed because the reason Aiden and Ren were not on good terms was because of me.

“Nevertheless, I don’t think you should worry yourself to death on this issue. I have seen him in worse states than this and there were even times I thought he was going to lose his life from some of those injuries by he survived through it. It may look like I don’t care but it is because I am already used to having to watch him hurt and heal without any medical assistance except he agrees for us to send for one.”

My mind went back to the blood on the floor, to the agony and fear on his face and I felt sick but what else could I say when Maya seemed to be calm about the situation.

She would know better than me so I just needed to trust her word on the issue. We fell into a tense silence while she dressed the cut and placed a tiny bandage on it and when she was done, I was expecting her to put me back in the chains like the other maids usually did when I returned to the room but instead she took my hand and squeezed, her face filled with sadness.

“I am sorry for what happened tonight. Please accept my apology on his behalf. I know that I have no excuses now because for as long as I could remember I have always made excuses for Aiden’s actions but now...” she shook her head, exhaling a deep breath. “I find myself unable to do so in this situation. Still, i beg you to not judge him too harshly. Aiden had a difficult

childhood that contributed in shaping him to be the man he is today. I know for a fact that it was not the most pleasant experience for you to be here against your will.”

My ears perked up at that. I was suddenly curious to know anything that there was that could at least help me figure out Aiden since it was possible that he would never tell me himself.

“What do you mean by he had a difficult childhood?” I asked.

Maya hesitated but I saw the change in her face when she decided to tell me and I sighed in relief.

“Aiden’s mother, had a difficult pregnancy and childbirth was worse. She had delivered Aiden’s twin sister, without any complications but she lost too much blood while giving birth to Aiden.”

I... I didn’t know that.

“The alpha raged in the operation room after Aiden was delivered and the doctors erroneously declared that the luna was dead. The alpha was in pain and his own hands strangled Aiden until he was on the verge of death for taking his mate from him-“

My heart clenched painfully. “How could he do that? That was his son-“

“You probably already realized that Nightshade men would do anything for their mate. Taking away their mates is practically taking away their will to live and their first instinct is to destroy anything in their paths that may be harmful to their mates. At that time, it was Aiden.”

“Oh no...” I clenched a fist to my chest, my heart throbbing in pain.

“Of course, Maddox regretted his actions deeply after the rage cleared, but he never looked at Aiden the same again. I couldn’t tell whether he couldn’t stand the sight of him or he hated remembering what he did to his own son. You see, Maddox and Elizabeth were kind and benevolent to their subjects, but to Aiden, they weren’t exactly attentive to his special needs as a child. Yes, they got him the best clothes money could buy, he was enrolled in the best schools with the best teachers, but they weren’t particularly invested emotionally in him. Not the way they were with Ashley. And I think that made things worse.

“They were a lot harder on him. As the future alpha of the pack, a lot of expectations were placed on his shoulders since he could sit on his own. He was pushed to always do his best, be the best, but he received neither acknowledgement nor accolades for his achievements. That was when their issue with their son started. They doted on his sister but they wouldn’t even celebrate Aiden’s birthday or acknowledge him. The little boy tried everything he could to get their attention.”

Her gaze drifted off, sorrow darkening her weathered gaze, as if she remembered a painful experience.

“He ran after them, came top of his class, and even hurt himself on purpose to gain their sympathy and when all of their attention kept going to his sister who didn’t do half of the things he did, he grew cold, wild and stubborn and turned his rage on Ashley.”

My heart dropped into the pit of my stomach. This... this was the Aiden I knew.

“He threw tantrums on her birthdays. I remembered a time he ruined her birthday cake, acted like a boy possessed and lashed out at her. She got hurt and it only made his parents more wary of him and they locked him up in his room for days as punishment. The same cycle continued over and over again, I lost count.”

My mouth had fallen open at some point and I wondered how little Aiden could have survived being in the shadow of his older sister and feeling like being born was a crime.

I pressed a hand to my mouth, feeling what little dinner I had coming back up my oesophagus. I had been comparing him to Ren when at least, Ren had been fortunate to find parents that loved and cherished him

Aiden didn’t have that. Not even within his own family.

I didn’t realize that I was crying until Maya offered me a handkerchief.

“I should probably stop now.”

“No, please. He won’t tell me any of this. We both know that. I want to understand. Help me understand.”

Heaving a sigh, she nodded.

“My boy... he has a strong heart. Even after everything his family did to him, Aiden had loved his family with a passion. He was ready to throw his life away for them, to save them during the m*****e. As broken and fractured as his family was and as rude as he had been to his older sister, he had tried his best to protect her, only to have her torn to pieces right before his eyes.”

“He was a child. There was nothing he could have done!”

“That didn’t stop him from trying. He could have been happy that his parents and sister had finally been taken away since they had been nothing but unkind to him. But the day they were killed, as they were lowered into the earth, his shadows manifested and there was darkness across our pack for days. Everyone felt the brunt of his grief and I feared that he was lost forever.”

I wiped my tears, swallowing the lump in my throat and she reached out and took my face in her wrinkled hands.

“Aiden is a troubled child, Lily. Sometimes, I believe that although he is a young man now, inside, he is still a little child who craves acceptance and attention and expresses his feelings in the only way he knows how to.”

She took my hands, squeezed gently. “He has done a lot of wrong, I admit, but his heart, broken and cold as it is, has always been in the right place. You must tread carefully, Lily. When Aiden loves, it is with a dark, desperate and undying fire that can never be put out and I fear that you will be consumed by that fire even though that is not his intention. I hope that you can understand his heart and his fear of losing his mate and not judge him too harshly based on his actions.”

Speechless, I could only watch as she walked away, the weight of this revelation settling heavy on my shoulders and bringing Aiden into new light.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 126

Lily’s pov

I should use this opportunity to run away was my first thought immediately Maya left and I realized that she had not chained me back to the bed or locked the door.

But all I could think about after she left me in the room was how I wanted to find out if Aiden was okay.

Taking tentative steps out of the bedroom and seeing no one in the long hallway, I wondered if it was foolish of me to not be using this opportunity to escape but I decided not to think about that and keep heading straight.

Maybe it was because he was my mate but his scent was easy to pick apart as I walked down the halls and stopped in front of a gigantic door that was slightly ajar, telling me that I had found his room.

Hesitantly I knocked on it and waited for a response.

“Go away,” He growled and I would have turned back but I didn’t come all this way to be chased away by his grumpiness especially when I remembered that he had definitely not allowed anyone to help him out.

Steeling my spine and entering the room, I closed the door gently and when I turned around, I froze in front of the door, stopping dead in my tracks, my mouth falling open because the room was filled with shadow creatures, wisps of darkness in the shapes of dogs lying down on different surfaces of the room, from his bed to the floor, his desk, armchairs and some were even sitting at the bottom of his bookshelf.

I felt like dissolving into the door when all at once, they turned to look at me, their gaze curious while I was mesmerized by the sight of them.

Beautiful.

These were the famous shadow hounds that Aiden could summon at will and yet right now they just looked like regular dogs even though some were larger than others.

Aiden was sitting sideways in front of a full length mirror, reaching for glass pieces stuck in his back and I winced as I watched him pull out a shard slowly and dump it into the bowl on the ground in front of him. He was still wearing the suit pants he had been wearing at dinner but his feet was bare and his chest was naked and I saw that he had healthy golden skin, lean and muscular. His hair, dark as the shadow hounds that filled the room was no longer brushed back with impeccable perfection but scattered all over his face.

“Maya,” he groaned, “if you are here to tell me to see the medic, then I will tell you the same thing I said the last five times that you came here. I’m fine. Don’t be a nag and leave me alone.”

His voice was tight and I realized that he was grinding his teeth in pain as he removed yet another shard. It clattered into the bowl before him.

“It’s just me...” I whispered and I swallowed nervously as he turned around immediately, his glassy grey eyes widening in shock to see me instead of Maya.

He went as still as a statue, eyes wide and alert, mouth open. “Lily?”

“I came to see if you were okay.” I said, trying to fill the silence that had enveloped the room and he quickly snapped out of his shock, calling his creatures to himself.

I could only watch in awe as the dogs dissolved into shadows and moved into his body until we were the only ones in the room. The assimilation had happened so fast, I wondered just how powerful he was to control the creatures at will.

Rising to his feet, he didn’t take a step forward but immediately, I felt intimidated by the sheer strength of him, keeping my eyes on his face instead of feeding my curiosity to check him out.

“What are you doing here? Why are you not asleep? And who let you out?”

I would have taken offense if he hadn’t looked genuinely curious as to why I was here and not trying to escape because he looked confused.

I don’t know, I wanted to answer but I settled for a shrug and stepped further into the room. “I was worried about you.”

For each step I took, he took two steps back.

“Y- you were?” He asked, unbelievably.

I must be going mad or Aiden just stuttered.

“Yes. Maya told me that you weren’t getting treated even though you were the one that took the brunt of the glass shards when the explosion happened.”

When he kept staring at me in that intense way of his, I realized that he wanted to hear everything I wanted to say so I cleared my throat and continued. “Maya told me that nobody tends to you when you are injured because you don’t like people seeing you vulnerable and that the only person you used to allow that privilege was Ren.”

I didn’t bother to add why they weren’t on speaking terms because we both knew why Ren was not here right now. Infact, we both knew what had caused Aiden to react violently and shatter all of the glass windows and ceiling in an unintentional outburst of what I now realized was jealousy.

When he still didn’t answer, I started taking slow steps forward and as I moved forward, he moved back, keeping his back to me. It almost felt like he was determined to not turn his back to me.

“Thank you...” he lost his breath. Cleared his throat. “Thank you for coming to see me. You can see that I am fine and once I can get the shards out, it’ll heal. It’s nothing serious. Go back to your room.”

I took another step forward. He stumbled back. “You should get some rest. You were injured too.”

I rolled my eyes and folded my arms, pausing in the center of his room that was at least ten times the size of my room at home.

“There are shards of glass in your back and I got just one scratch that has been treated already. Stop being so stubborn and let me help you remove what’s left or your wound will get infected and you won’t be able to heal.”

“I can handle myself, Lily”

“You won’t let anyone else help you and I’m here offering so why won’t you just let go of whatever is making you so stubborn and let me help you? I’ll leave once I’m done if that is what the problem is. The quicker I help, the quicker I can get out of your hair.”

When he opened his mouth to speak again, I knew he was about to refuse and I glared at him hard, stopping him from speaking.

“Fine.” He grumbled, his shoulders slumping in defeat and I fought the urge to smile triumphantly, walking over to his bed that was so big it felt like I was an ant sitting on the edge and patted the space beside me.

“Come.”

Raising an eyebrow at me at the command in my tone, I was surprised that he didn't complain, only dragging the bowl to where I was sitting and putting the first aid box on the bed.

I was expecting him to sit and turn his back to me but instead he climbed the bed, flopped down on his stomach and rested his head on my thighs.

I sucked in a breath at our contact, hating the sparks that flew between us.

It was just the mating attraction thing, I tried to reassure myself mentally and finally paid attention to his back.

I struggled hard to contain my scream at the sight, realizing why he had been hesitant about turning his back to me.

His back was shredded so with cuts so deep, I could dip my fingers in them. His entire back was a canvas of pain, deep, thick gashes that tore through skin and muscle.

Something thick and heavy choked the back of my throat because this was similar but far worse than the scars on the maid's back. I was slowly realizing that I might have been wrong in my assumption that Aiden was the one who had given her those scars. I felt sick, the sight nauseating and threatening to upturn my barely digested dinner. I couldn't imagine what he must have gone through, who could have been cruel enough to scar him so terribly.

“How did you get these scars?” I whispered before I could stop myself. There was a feeling in my chest, a dark murderous feeling. Like I can kill someone for this. Like I should kill someone for this.

He went completely rigid. And I realized too late that I shouldn't... i shouldn't have brought it up.

It must be a difficult topic for him.

I swallowed down bile and got to work immediately, gently removing the shards left. He had gotten most of the larger ones out and it was truly a testament to his strength that he remains still when I removed what was left because it had to be very painful to have that amount of glass embedded in your skin and still be able to speak.

He didn't speak for a few minutes. He was so silent, I thought he would not reply me but just as I was about to tell him not to bother, his body slumped.

"Whips."

"What?"

"Whip marks. They're punishments from my uncle." He answered in a dead tone and I wished he was facing me so I could see his eyes as he answered.

"Why?"

"I'm not very good at obeying orders, so I get punished a lot when he's around." He added with a light chuckle that I guess was meant to soften the atmosphere but I was horrified.

How could someone do this to another person? Wolves healed when they were injured so for a werewolf to have scars from anything, it had to have been very severe and probably unable to heal immediately it happened. How could his uncle hurt him like this?

I traced the healed scar, he groaned at my touch.

I retracted. "I'm sorry. Does it hurt?"

"No. Your touch." He gritted out. "It feels so good." He admitted.

Oh...

I almost went back to tracing the road map of pain but I stopped myself.

"Where is he now? Your uncle."

"No idea," he let out a deep breath. "He's probably working on another business deal on the other side of the world. I hope he never comes back."

I didn't even know what to say to that and the room was enveloped in tense silence again as I continued to clean his wounds.

Thankfully, I saw that the healing process had already begun and I was about to tell him that I was done and ready to leave when his body stiffened again and this time he turned his face to look at me, his head still on my lap.

“I’m sorry...” he said quietly, reaching up to press featherlight fingers to the bandage on my forehead. He withdrew his hand at the last moment, as if suddenly remembering that he mustn’t touch me without my permission. “I really didn’t mean to hurt you.”

I held my breath, my heart stuttering. “It’s fine. I’m fine now.”

“No it’s not. You must know how sorry I am. I’m so stupid. Bringing you here was so stupid. You want nothing to do with me and it’s all my fault. I was wrong. I caused you so much pain and I just keep messing up and making things worse. Everything I did... even if I knew the right words to say, there are no words that can absolve what I have done to you and I don’t know how to make it right.”

I- I can’t believe it.

My heart clenched and my eyes watered because this was all I had ever wanted. For him to apologize like he meant it. Feeling overwhelmed, it was on the tip of my tongue to ask him to let me go so I could flee but as I was about to say it , I realized that he might misread my fleeing as anger and that was the last thing I wanted.

“I’m done.” I chose to say instead, taking the conversation back to his wounds.

I moved to rise but his arm came around my hips. “Don’t. Please, don’t go. Stay for a bit.” He whispered and I found myself nodding.

This wasn’t so bad. Spending time with him didn’t feel so bad. Infact, I wanted it. I wanted to stay.

He relaxed when I settled back in, making himself more comfortable and I finally gave in to my intrusive thoughts, urging me to stroke his hair.

My eyes widened at how soft it was and as I kept running my hands through the locks leisurely, I realized that he had fallen asleep, his arms wrapped around my waist.

He was like a giant cat, purring softly in my lap as I stroked him gently and I caught myself immediately I noticed that I was staring at him for too long, looking up to indulge myself in his room.

In the gigantic space, an entire wall was made of nothing but bookshelves bustling with books, both new and old with most of them have their spines falling out.

There were more books here than I could have ever imagined and if there was one thing I had never pegged Aiden as, it was a reader. I realized that just as I had accused Aiden of having no idea who I was, I didn't know a lot about him either.

Reaching again to stroke his hair, I felt movement around my hands and gasped when a little smokey creature peeked out from beneath his raven locks, gliding over to sit beside me on the bed and wagged its tail. It looked like a little hound puppy. It was so adorable, with large eyes that resembled a teddy bear's.

"Hi sweetie." I gushed and my voice woke Aiden, who groggily opened his eyes and stretched out a hand to the tiny puppy.

The creature glided back over to him, tucking itself behind his ear until it was obstructed by his hair and I couldn't help the smile that lit up my face as I watched the little dog that was the size of my pinky, finding a space in Aiden's hair to hide.

The creature peeked out occasionally to stare at me curiously and with eyes that were large pools of darkness.

The creature peeked out occasionally to stare at me curiously and with eyes that were large pools of darkness.

"What are you?" I whispered to the creature when it peeked out again to stare at me and it was Aiden that answered, his eyes still closed.

"A friend. He and the others keep me company when I don't want to feel so alone."

Alone... I once told Ren that his powers was a manifestation of how empathetic he was. His urge to heal, to save, to fix broken things and see the better in everyone. Perhaps in the same way, Aiden's powers signify his darkness, his ruthless nature but also his deep need for company, love and acceptance.

Just then the creature, who I started to realize had a mind of it's own, peeked out of Aiden's hair again, and moved to settle itself in my lap, right before it grew to a full sized puppy. Giving in to the curiosity, I patted it's head and gasped in surprise that my hand didn't go through it like smoke.

Aiden sat up, watching the entire interaction with a sleepy smile on his face and I fought the urge to reach forward and push his messy dark hair out of his face.

"Nobody, not even Ren and Zac have tried to touch my creatures. Everyone is terrified of them."

The dog licked my palm and I giggled, wondering why anyone would be terrified of such an adorable creature.

"Does it have a name?"

"He. And yes, his name is Cerberus and he's the most vicious of the bunch."

"Yeah, he is the epitome of viciousness." I laughed, not taking him seriously as I tickled the dog's belly. It wagged it's tail and licked me again and I laughed as it licked its snout.

Aiden was suddenly silent and when I looked up, his expression was solemn.

"What?"

"If I had known that the way to your heart was a furry creature, I would have gotten you a whole truckload of them."

His words sobered me up immediately and I shook my head.

"It's not as simple as that, Aiden." I sighed, patient, now that I understood he knew nothing of the matter. "Love isn't bought, isn't forced. It's earned. It's not about buying me things. Anyone can do that. It's about moments like this without a price tag attached to it. This is the first time I've felt safe enough to be myself around you."

Aiden stared at me, digesting my words.

"It's not been easy always being on guard. I worried that you would use my vulnerability against me if I let you in. Like this was a ploy, a trick to further hurt me. But this, this moment where you are baring your truth to me without

any ulterior motive or imposing your will on me. This means a lot to me. It helps me to see that you are more than what I thought you were and that I can one day hope to trust you. We can one day, be friends.”

“Friend?” He perked up at the word, like the thought delighted him. “We can be friends?”

“Of course.”

“I thought you hate me.”

“I used to... I still want to... but I just don’t know how to hate you anymore. Maybe it’s Stockholm syndrome talking but I want to understand you now. I really do. It’s like I made so many assumptions about you; who you are, why you do the things you do and I was so wrong. So horribly wrong about each and every one. You’re not what I thought. You’re so terribly human, it’s unnerving.”

“And you still want to be my friend?” He asked, his voice hopeful. Like nothing else mattered except I confirmed what he just asked.

I nodded, taking the giant leap.

His grin could light up the entire mansion. “I’d like that, Lily. I’d like that very much.”

And something in my brain must be fundamentally damaged, because I dared to believe that I can fix him. Because I saw myself in him. He was a spoiled prince with a temper problem, but he was neglected and mistreated for something out of his control, just like me. He was treated harshly for things he had had no power over. He was never given a chance to love and be loved, never given the benefit of doubt.

He experiences negative human emotions just like the rest of us, rage, jealousy, pettiness, vengeance, hunger for acceptance, except he doesn’t know how to express them in a way that is universally accepted as normal.

Or maybe I can’t fix him. Maybe I don’t need to. I just have to not make things too hard for him anymore, to not make a bad situation any worse and give him a chance to figure it out at his own pace. I could do that.

I sighed, deciding that my time here was up.

Rising to my feet, I laid Cerberus on the bed gently and patted his head before I stretched.

“Goodnight, Aiden.”

“Goodnight.” He answered and my heart dropped. Why did it feel like I was expecting him to say something else?

I turned around to leave and was almost at the door when he scrambled after me, his large hand clasping around my wrist.

“Stay the night.”

I froze.

“I mean, you don’t have to but... I’d like that. I’d like that a lot.” Turning me around to face him, he implored. “I won’t do anything you’re uncomfortable with, I promise. I just don’t want to be alone tonight. “

And then he walked towards the bed and lined up pillows in the middle.

“You can choose whatever side you want and I’ll take the other side. I’ll keep to my side of the bed.”

He was so patronizing, I considered it.

Cerberus gave me doe eyes from where he was sitting on the bed, wagging his little tail and against my better judgement to run away, especially because it was becoming hard to remember why I even hated Aiden, I walked over to one side of the bed, sliding under the blanket that Aiden offered me and Cerberus morphed back into his pea sized shape and rushed to hide in my heap of hair. He felt so weightless, I worried that I would crush him midsleep.

Aiden laid on the other side and turned to face me, resting his cheek in his folded arm, stormy grey eyes finding mine.

“This means nothing,” I made it clear so that he doesn’t misunderstand. “This doesn’t mean I’m choosing you.”

“Of course not. We’re just sharing a bed. As friends.”

“Yeah.”

Hopefully, he couldn't hear my racing heart beating out of my chest.

The last thing I remembered as I fell asleep was looking into those thunderstorm eyes of his.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 127

Aiden's pov

For the first time in a long time, my sleep had been dreamless and peaceful. I had forgotten what that felt like. The peace that came with it and when I opened my eyes and saw that Lily was still here, I knew that there was a reason that I had slept well.

Curled into a ball, the blanket still covering her and most of her hair now covering part of her face, Lily was still fast asleep and I felt a sudden lightness that I didn't know was possible. Cerberus was perched on her pillow, licking her forehead and I wanted to laugh at Lily's disbelieving face when I had told her that Cerberus was the most vicious of my hounds.

It said a lot about him that he had chosen to appear to her in the form of a puppy instead of the ferocious beast that he was and when he raised his head to look at me, I nodded in thanks to him because he had unintentionally helped me get closer to Lily, and it was a gift that I would treasure for a long time.

Her words still resonated in my mind from last night. Everything about last night was still fresh in my memory and when I looked at her again and saw that the ring I had given her still remained in her finger and that she had not taken it off, my heart squeezed with a foreign feeling that I couldn't quite name yet. I felt so full of something so light.

I had been surprised when she had come to my room to check in on me instead of finding a way to escape and I had thought it was all a ploy to get me to lower my guard so that she would flee when I fell asleep, not that she would be able to, especially now that Cerberus was in love with her and attached to her by the hip, but still seeing her here made hope spark in my heart that she hadn't left. I know that it was probably foolish at this point to believe that it meant something that she hadn't tried to run but I was delusional at this point.

Priceless moments, she had said. “This is what matters the most to me. It helps me to see that you are more than what I know you to be and that I can one day hope to trust you”

I was going to do whatever I could to give her more reasons to trust me. Maybe then, it would be easy for her to love me. To accept me.

Leaning against my hand, I watched her with a bright smile, proud of myself for keeping to my side of the bed even though it had been a struggle all night with my wolf to not pull her close and crush her against my chest and I was glad that I had not done anything that would make her guards go back up.

Unable to resist the urge to not touch her at all, I settled for helping her remove strands of hair from her face and that was when I noticed the subtle change in her breathing and the frown that appeared on her face.

She looked troubled, her brows scrunched up in a way that made me wonder if she was having a nightmare or in pain and sweat pooled at her forehead.

Was the air conditioner not working?

Reaching for the remote, I lowered the room temperature, surprised that she was sweating when the room was practically freezing and just as I reached out to place my hand on her forehead, she kicked off the blanket and whimpered and my eyes widened with horror at how hot her body was.

She was burning up with a fever.

“Lily, wake up.” I said frantically, shaking her and when she didn’t move, I rushed to grab my phone and called Maya to send for a healer, right before I rushed into the bathroom and came back with a wet towel, cradling her unconscious body to my chest as I placed the cloth on her head.

“Lily, please.” I whispered, hating that I wasn’t like Ren who could heal her with a touch of his hand. All I could do was break bones and cause death.

There was a knock on the door and the healer walked in after Maya.

“My prince.” The man said with a bow.

“You need to place her on the bed so that he can examine her, Aiden.” Maya said carefully when I growled at the poor man as he tried to touch her, my wolf not wanting anyone to come close.

With a deep frown, I gently dropped her on the bed, not moving one inch away.

I fought down the revulsion and the urge to tear him from her, hovering over them agitatedly, at seeing the healer touch her as he examined her, but anyone would do before I can get a hold of Ren.

I watched as the healer checked her vitals, pausing at the mark on her neck and his eyes widened before he raised his head and spoke.

I watched as the healer checked her vitals, pausing at the mark on her neck and his eyes widened before he raised his head and spoke.

“She is mated to another, is she not?”

“Yes.” It was Maya that answered because it seemed agreeing felt like there was ash on my tongue.

“She is suffering withdrawal symptoms from being snatched away from her mate too quickly during the nesting period. The bond they share is withering away and taking her with it. She needs to be with her mate immediately or they will both die. However, we can draw a bath of ice for now to keep her temperature low while you contact her mate.”

“Come, doctor, let us draw the bath.” Maya gestured towards my bathroom and the two of them bowed before they left.

Filled with rage and guilt, I stared at Lily, hating that once again this was my fault and grabbed my phone, dialing Ren’s number.

He picked immediately.

“Ren, this is-“

“It’s Zac, you motherfucker! Why the f**k have you been ignoring our calls? We have been trying to reach you for days. What the hell is wrong with you?”

“Something is wrong. Lily is with me and she’s not waking up. I need Ren to get here as fast as he can. We can deal with our issues later. Please tell him to get here as fast as he can.”

“Well, Ren will not be able to answer you right now because the exact same thing is happening to him. He felt it immediately Lily started getting sick and like the hero he is, he transferred most of her symptoms to himself through their bond. He’s almost comatose right now. So if you care about your mate and your best friend, remove that stick you shoved up your a*s and tell your f*****g guards to drop the wards surrounding the pack so that I can bring him to you.”

And before I could answer, the line dropped dead.

All I could hear was that it was my fault and I prayed that the two people I loved the most in the world would not pay for my selfishness as I walked out of the bedroom to get the wards taken down.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 128

Aiden’s POV

The air was thick with tension as Zac’s car screeched into the driveway and all I could think about as he parked the car was how all of this would have been avoided if I had not been classic Aiden, selfish and wanting everything to go my way no matter the consequences to other people.

Because if what Zac said was true, the only reason why Lily was still alive was because Ren was keeping her afloat somehow through the mating bond while bearing the burden himself.

How could I even compete with that?

As the car parked, I walked towards the passenger seat just as Ren got out of the car and stopped at the sight of him, an uncomfortable tightness in my throat.

Guilt, I realized. What I felt right now was guilt.

It felt like a punch to the gut looking at him because it was him and yet it wasn’t.

His glowing fair skin that as once vibrant and warm, had taken on an eerie, ghostly hue. The haunting sight of his almost lifeless appearance sent shivers down my spine and his sunken eyes had dark circles beneath them. Ren happened to be the prettiest male in the entire Shadow cove community and it was no secret that his features were more delicate than that of some females and that even women wanted to attain his level of otherworldly beauty.

I had done this to him. Made him look like a shell of himself practically resting against the hood of the car to stand upright.

Closing the distance between us, I was about to reach for him and hesitated when I saw the wary look in his eyes. The way he gritted his teeth.

If there was one thing that I could have assured myself in my life, it was that I would never see wariness in the eyes of my best friend. Ren saw me for what I was and even though he never agreed with me when he didn't like what I was doing which was all the time, not once had he ever looked at me like he was afraid that I was going to hurt him. The knowledge that I had somehow made him believe that I was away at me, the guilt almost crippling.

I had said that I wanted to kill him at school but I didn't actually mean it. If I wanted to kill him, he'd have been dead in an instant. Did he believe me when I said that? Couldn't he read my mind anymore? Or had he just given up on trying to understand me and saw me as a lost cause?

"I know you want to hit me right now. I'd do the same if I were you." I said and he merely shook his head, his pale face making me feel even worse as he leaned against the car.

"I don't want to hit you " He whispered.

"But I do," Zac growled, appearing from nowhere and punching me right in the face. I stumbled back, pain flaring in my left cheek. I grunted, pinching my nostrils as blood rushed up my nose, and worked my jaw. He grabbed me by my shirt, shaking me roughly.

"What the f u c k is wrong with you man? Do you want Lily to die because of your stubbornness and sheer stupidity? Answer me!"

I could egg him on, hurt him by saying the wrong words and make an already bad situation even worse, add fuel to the fire to conceal my own pain and insecurity. That was always my defense mechanism.

“Hit me,” I said instead, “you know I deserve it.”

“Playing hero isn’t going to save you, you bastard!” Zac said, about to hit me again but his hand froze midair. He gritted his teeth and glared at Ren and I realized that he had stopped Zac with his powers.

“The hell, man? You should not even be stopping me. Have you looked in the mirror? You’re barely standing and it’s because of this a****e . You should even be more offended than I am. His foolishness would have gotten you and Lily killed.” He pushed me away and moved to stand beside Ren who looked at me and I lowered my head in shame, unable to look at my best friend.

Ren c****d his head to the side when I looked at him again, his eyes glowing and I knew that he could read my emotions no matter how hard I tried to mask it.

“He feels remorse. Knowing that he does is enough for me.” Ren answered and when Zac scoffed, he turned to stare at him.

“Tell me that you remember the last time Aiden ever felt guilt or remorse for his actions, Zac. I know that you cannot see it, but one look at him and his emotions reeks with it. I don’t remember the last time Aiden has ever actually felt sorry for something he did. Have you?”

The two of them looked at me and Ren patted Zac on his back before heading back to the car and reaching into the backseat and then he took out a backpack and threw it at me.

“The bag is filled with my things; clothes, a blanket, a beanie and even socks. These things should be more than enough to keep Lily in good condition and with my scent around her and cold baths, she should be back to normal in no time.”

He turned around to head back to the car and paused, turning again to look at me.

“I want you to know this, Aiden. I am not sorry for marking Lily. For once in my life I decided to do something selfish and choose my own path and she is my path. I’d never regret anything that I do with Lily. I am sorry however that my actions hurt you. That was never my intention.”

His words were well articulated like it always was and I found myself envious of how he was able to string his words together while I just stood there, unable to even give him a proper apology. Unable to properly express myself without saying or so doing the wrong things.

I realized how selfish I had been to try to tear away Lily away from Ren.

They deserved each other and I knew that if our positions were reversed, I would never have been benevolent enough to do what Ren had just done. It must have hurt him to have to leave her here, but he had done it for me, even though he knew I wouldn't have done the same for him. I didn't deserve any of the people in my circle because despite being a colossal f u c k u p, they were still always there for me.

It changed something in me and I decided that I wanted to become someone that was well deserving of their love. If Lily wanted to leave when she woke up, I wouldn't stop her.

Glancing at Zac, Ren gestured toward the car.

"We should start heading back if we hope to make it back to the pack before nightfall."

I raised my eyebrows in surprise and Zac swivelled around to face Ren, dumbfounded.

"I thought you were here to stay. Or that you would take her away. You don't want to see how Lily is doing?"

Ren pinned me in place with his eyes.

"Unless you're prepared for the possibility of Lily desperate enough to beg me to f**k her in your home because that's exactly what will happen if we are in the same orbit right now, it's best if I stay away until she's in her right mind and not thinking with her starved wolf."

I knew that he wasn't saying it to hurt me but the truth hurt and I guessed I would have to live with reality that whether I liked it or not, Lily was mated to Ren.

"Just let me know how she's doing" he answered and something heavy constricted my throat when he nodded to Zac. "Zac, we're leaving."

“The hell we are!” Zac growled, leaving the two of us where we were and stomping up the stairs of my mansion. “I’m not leaving until I see my bonded. And you’re not either. Even if Lily gets better, what’s going to happen to you? You need to see her and we’re staying the night. If Aiden has a problem with it, that’s not my problem.”

He didn’t wait for a response from Ren and he pushed his way in, forging ahead. I looked at Ren who was barely holding himself up against the car and he did something I didn’t expect he’d do in this situation. He laughed.

Something about the response unfurled the tight, tangled up knot in the pit of my stomach and I cracked a smile at him and helped him into my home.

Zac was already cuddling Lily in my bed, stroking her hair and seemingly checking her body for signs that I hurt her. Lily was finally awake, which was a relief for me.

He stopped at the shackle marks around her wrist and I saw him ground his teeth in rage.

“No, he didn’t hurt me, I swear,” she tried to convince him. She turned, a beautiful smile on her lips that made my heart stampede out of my chest but suddenly, she froze midsmile, her eyes falling to my left. She gasped her eyes lighting up with joy and relief as soon as she saw her bonded mate.

“Ren!” She cried and Ren immediately left my side, stumbling into bed with her as they held each other close.

“Ren!” She cried and Ren immediately left my side, stumbling into bed with her as they held each other close.

“I missed you, baby. I missed you so much.” He whispered back, burying his face in her hair and breathing her in. She pulled him in for a kiss that twisted my gut.

I gritted my teeth and walked out, remembering not to slam the door on my way out because I had no right to be angry right now. I had hurt her. Hurt them. The least I could do was stomach all of this.

Zac found me in the bar downstairs where I was sitting at the counter and downing my eighth glass of cognac.

“What? Back from the reunion so soon.” I bit out.

He took his sweet time replying me and stalked straight to the freezer. Taking out an icepack, he tossed it to me and I caught it in my hands, glaring at it.

“You know, you can just say you’re sorry,” I hissed as I pressed the pack to my bruised cheekbone.

“Can’t. I’d be lying.” he drawled, looking into the cooler where I kept an emergency stash of blood bags just for him. He took one out, tore it open and gulped it down hungrily before wiping his lips and shrugging.

“I left because they’re f u c k i n g right now and as much as I would have liked to stay and watch, I think they need their privacy.”

Someone just sucker punched the daylights out of me. I wobbled, my glass slipping from my hands and shattering on the floor.

Zac raised an eyebrow at me, slipping into the barstool beside me with his second blood bag. “I’m not cleaning that up.”

I ignored the pain flaring in my chest. I deserve it, I reminded myself. I deserve it.

“You look different. Less of an a*****e than usual.” Another gulp, a good few seconds cringing at the taste, “the Aiden I know would have broken down those doors by now.”

I shrugged. I wanted to tell him that I understood now, I understood why Lily was so repulsed by me, why she wanted nothing to do with me. I had tried every key in the goddamn door to force my way in but all she needed was for me to knock. To let me in. Her choice, she had said. I could rave, rage, but it would only make her pull away from me. So I’ll wait, wait for her to make her choice and try to accept her verdict. Doesn’t mean it’s going to be easy.

“I don’t know if she’s ever going to accept the mating bond, but I’m not going to take her away from the one she obviously loves.”

Zac tucked his tongue against his cheek, stared at me with piercing onyx black eyes. “Ren thinks there’s a way she doesn’t have to choose.”

I frowned. “What do you mean?”

“It’s called sharing, genius. The rest of us learned it in kindergarten.”

“J a c k a s s,” I muttered at his jab.

Share Lily... each of us can have her. None of us has to lose her. Rhea had suggested the same thing and I was only just seriously considering it, the idea, the hope that Lily would be open to this.

“Think about it,” he said, rapping his black painted nails on the bar top before rising to his feet. He chucked the now empty blood bag in the trash, “now roll up your sleeves. I’ve not had my fresh blood fix since you took Lily away thanks to Ren rotting away like a corpse.”

He didn’t need to ask twice. I did as he asked and as he took my hand, his fangs grazing my skin, my blood thrummed with anticipation from the high I was sure to feel from this.

This was something to take my mind off of the fact that my best friend was currently f*****g my mate in my own bed, something to take both our minds off the fact that we both wanted it to be us in his place and as his fangs pierced into my skin, I shut my eyes, losing myself to the pure pleasure coursing through my veins and suddenly, thoughts of seeing Lily and Ren in bed together didn’t feel so bad afterall.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 129

Aiden’s pov

If someone had told me days ago that I would be sitting beside Lily on my bed and trying to feed her and that she would be willingly swallowing the spoonfuls of broth that I was giving to her I would have laughed and called them a bloody liar right before I killed them on the spot for daring to make me hope.

But here I am and here we are. She had all the chances to leave with Ren this morning, but she hadn’t taken them. She agreed to stay instead until she got better... with me.

Ren’s presence did wonders to improve her health. I promised myself that I wouldn’t think of the fact that the sheets now smelled of the both of them, that Lily constantly bares her heart and her body to him. All that mattered to me was that she was alive and she was going to be fine.

“I don’t know why you’re going through all of this stress to feed me when we both know that I’m just going to throw up again.” Lily said with a frown and when I merely smiled and gestured for her to open her mouth so that I could give her another spoonful of broth, she huffed and glared at me but it was a weak glare and my little smile turned into a grin at how adorable she was.

Her hair was up in a messy bun and it was a look that I had never seen on her before but absolutely loved. It felt intimate to see her like this and it didn’t even matter that she was wearing Ren’s clothes anymore or that she was mated to him. I was more than grateful for the opportunity to share this moment with her.

“Just one more spoon and I’ll leave you alone.”

“Yeah, right. You said that five spoons ago, you dirty liar”

Fighting the urge to chuckle as she tried to swat away my hand, I waited until she opened her mouth and somehow, after several minutes of grumbling, death threats and theatrics on my part because it felt like I was feeding an adorable baby that could speak, she was able to eat everything and I was happy because I knew that even if she threw up, some of the food would stay down.

Next, I took my time to towel the exposed parts of her body with a wet rag like the healer had instructed me to do to reduce her fever and when I placed the back of my hand against her forehead and it was cool to touch, I heaved a sigh of relief.

“Your fever has broken and you have some colour in your cheeks. Well done, love.”

“You shouldn’t be doing this, Aiden. I’m sure you have a maid that will help you to do these things and I’m sure you have better things to do than sit here and play nurse.” She grumbled and I took her hand in mine, gently caressing it as I quietly whispered words that I was worried she might not receive well.

“I like taking care of you.”

She looked speechless and I was about to drop something very f u c k i n g stupid to fill the sudden silence that followed my confession when all of a sudden she shook her head and withdrew her hand from mine, rubbing her face with a sigh.

I'm sorry, Aiden."

Confused and worried that she was apologizing because I had gone and done something wrong again, I looked at her.

"Did I do something wrong?"

"Gods, no. I'm so sorry for being such a handful. I can't stop thinking about how I came between you and Ren. You couldn't get the help you needed when you were hurt and I took the one person that you allowed to be close enough to heal you away. You don't like being treated by other people and you had to stay hurt for longer."

Tears started steaming down her face almost immediately and she angrily wiped her face as she continued.

"I keep thinking about that night at dinner when you got hurt and those scars, my God—"

Gods, I can't believe I have ever hurt someone as sweet as her. The urge to sweep her into my arms was so overwhelming and I feared that I would scare her away so I swallowed as I reached for her slowly.

Hand hanging midair, I waited for her to refuse my touch, to yell at me and recoil in revulsion but instead, she leaned into my hand, her cheek resting in my palm and that small action made my heart beat even faster.

"You don't have to be sorry, Lily."

"Yes, I do. I didn't know how lonely you were without your best friends by your side. I don't think you even realize it either—"

My chest tightened to see how much pain she was in blaming herself for something that was not even her fault. How do I tell her that I don't deserve it. I don't deserve it. Her thoughts about me, her careful consideration, I deserved nothing from her.

"None of this is your fault and if there is anyone to be blamed for any of that, it's me for acting like a jerk to you. Ren had tried to warn me off but I didn't listen until it was too late. You don't need to apologize to an a*****e like me, I should be the one apologizing for all that I have put you through."

We shared a quiet moment together before Lily raised the edge of her blanket, and patted the space beside her gently.

“You look tired. I’ve been hogging your bed and attention all day and I’m starting to feel weird. Join me?”

I didn’t need much persuasion and as I climbed into my bed that smelled like her and Ren and settled under the blankets, my heart started racing faster as she snuggled up against me.

I was so afraid of touching her, so worried that I would not be able to stop myself from ravishing her so my hands laid limply as she rested her head against my shoulder.

Nyx was practically running wild in my head, urging me to grab her, to take her, to fu-

“Can I ask something?”

I jerked. “Anything you want, Lily.”

“Why are you so averse to the idea of getting healed by other healers?”

I froze, picking at a lint on my pants, because this topic was one that I dreaded remembering.

But maybe telling Lily about me would only bring us closer.

But maybe telling Lily about me would only bring us closer.

“The circumstances surrounding my birth... a lot of people saw it as a bad omen. I had been born on a starless night that prophesied impending disaster for not just me but the entire pack as well, so it was easy to believe that I was bad news. Add that to the fact that I was born with a special wolf whose powers manifested earlier than it should and turned out to be too dark and volatile and people rallied around to agree that letting me live was a mistake and that I was destined for destruction. The first assassination attempt on my life was when I was a little over five.”

Lily gasped and linked her hand through mine and for some reason, it tethered me to the present, making it easier for me to continue.

“I was very sick and the healer that was supposed to make me better tried to kill me instead. I remember feeling like I was being strangled as the healer slowly drained my life force, telling me that creatures like me shouldn’t be allowed to live. My parents found out when it was too late and a lot of black magic was used to not only bring me back to life but also to protect me from future attempts on my life. Because of the spells, I can’t be killed by just anyone... except my mate.”

Hazel green eyes widened at that.

“It didn’t bring me the peace they thought it would, especially because other people tried to kill me after that. Since then, I haven’t allowed another healer to touch me. I think I developed a phobia. With Ren, it’s different. I trust him with my life. He’s my brother. My best friend.”

The steady rise and fall of Lily’s chest made me realize that somewhere along the line she had fallen asleep and it made me feel warm inside that she trusted me enough to fall asleep in my arms. As I held her in my arms, I felt amazed by how I was able to hold something so precious and not break it and when she readjusted, her face moving up to my full view and her little mouth in a soft pout, I fought the urge to kiss her.

“I feel so complete with you in my arms” I whispered, cupping her cheek. “You feel like home to me. I’m afraid to have you by my side because I’ve never made anyone I love happy. You make me want to hold on. My love, my life. I need you to love me. That’s all I need.”

Gently stroking her hair, I settled for a kiss on her forehead and smiled when she moved even closer to me, seeking warmth.

I don’t know how long we stayed like that. We could have stayed like that for eternity and I wouldn’t have minded. The door suddenly opened and when I looked up to see who it was, Maya was wearing a grim expression on her terror stricken face.

“Aiden,” she bowed and said those words that made my blood run cold.

“Your uncle has returned. And he requests your presence in the study.”

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 130

Lily’s POV

“You feel like home to me. I’ve never really had a home.”

“I’ve never made anyone I love happy.”

” I need you to love me, Lily. That’s all I need.”

Aiden’s words kept echoing in my ears when I woke up and I wondered if it had really happened or if it was a dream as I looked around and realized that I was alone in the large room.

I didn’t want to admit that I hoped it wasn’t a dream, choosing instead to stand up and snoop around now that he wasn’t around. I was curious about him and at least now that he wasn’t here, I could find out more about him.

I discovered his closet and when I walked in, my breath was taken away because it was not only larger than the walk-in closet that he designed for me, it was filled to the brim with so many clothes, arranged in varying colours.

Coats, shirts, sweaters, pants with beautiful rich fabric, ties and bow ties, belts, wristwatches, scarves, gloves, and even cuff links were arranged impeccably, lining the shelves and racks and I noticed that he preferred his clothes in darker hues; black, navy blue, dark brown and burgundy, and that the styles spoke of how much he was into fashion.

He owned more coats, more shoes, more pants and shirts than I had ever seen in my life, and it looked like his obsession with books was on par with his obsession for clothes and fashion. It made me realize now that he wasn’t trying to wow me or buy me with the closet that he had designed for me. Aiden simply enjoyed shopping for clothes.

Walking back out, I stared at the open window, the gust of wind bringing to my attention that not only was I alone but without any chains binding me. Peeking my head out of the door, I saw that there were no guards here either. It means that Aiden was starting to trust me and this would be the perfect time to escape, when his guard was down.

Instead, I decided to look for him. The halls were quiet, cold and dark and unlike before where I would have seen at least one servant or guard, there was no one. It made me feel on edge and I wanted to turn around and go back to Aiden’s room because at least there I felt a semblance of comfort.

I pivoted on my heels, turning around to retrace my steps and came to a humbling realization.

I was hopelessly lost.

I had just taken a right turn when an unfamiliar voice that made me stop in my tracks travelled down the hall and I dived into the first room that I could find and hid under a heavy chaise, holding a hand to my mouth to stop myself from making a sound and hoping the owner of that cold voice would just pass but it was just my luck that the footsteps drew closer and the man walked into the room.

Quick, deliberate steps that echoed throughout the room. I felt Aiden's presence walk into the room too but I couldn't even relax as I heard the door lock behind them.

"Nephew," the smooth, cold voice like silk and jagged ice said and I realized who it was with crippling horror.

Aiden's uncle, Victor Vanderbilt, alpha of Night Shade pack and acting owner of Vanderbilt corp.

The man behind the execution of my father. The man that hurts his own nephew so bad that he can't heal from it.

"It's so good to have you back, uncle." Aiden said but his voice was dripping with sarcasm and if I could pick up on it then of course his uncle did too.

He let out a tired sigh. "I don't have the time for your childish insolence right now," he said and I peeked out from beneath the chaise, curious to see what he looked like.

I don't know what I was expecting. An old, wicked looking man with an eye patch, wrinkled skin, fanged teeth and balding head but he's not... he's not...

He was so goodlooking, I struggled to equate him with the monster that scarred my mate's backs, that punishes his workers for the littlest things. And I realized that it wasn't fair. He was so attractive, he reeled you in and he was a walking example of pretty privilege through and through, wrapped up in his ten thousand dollar Tom Fords and holding an expensive looking walking cane.

“You’ve been busy lately, haven’t you. I’ve received complaints left and right.”

He was taking his time, taking off his cufflinks and rolling up his sleeves as Aiden stood before him, unflinching, almost bored. But now that I knew a little bit more of him, I saw that the bored look on his face was a perfect mask to hide his terror and disdain for his uncle.

“You’ve been so busy that you attracted the wrong attention. You see, usually, I don’t care for your extra curricular activities. Boys will be boys and I know how much you like to break your toys, but even I have to admit that you went too far with this one, Aiden.”

They were standing face to face. Their stances set as if they were seconds away from engaging in a brawl. Standing facing each other like that, they looked so alike that Victor could pass for Aiden’s older brother. The same inky black hair, impeccable style and ruthless gaze in their chilly grey eyes.

He placed a hand on Aiden’s shoulder, seemingly comforting but I flinched as Aiden let out a pained growl and I heard the sound of bones breaking as Victor crushed shoulder joint with his bare hands.

“I got word from Sebastian and Paige’s parents about what happened to them. Sebastian can never walk again and Paige’s nails have been ripped off her fingers. I have every reason to believe that you are the one responsible for their current state.”

“And what do you want me to say?” Aiden growled through gritted teeth and I squeezed my eyes shut, wishing he wouldn’t rile him up more. “That I didn’t do it? You know me better than that. They deserved it. After all, I’m only learning from you when it comes to cold cut cruelty.”

Livid, Víctor raised his cane and it came down on the side of Aiden’s face with a resounding crack that made me wince in pain at the sound of the wooden stick hitting his head.

Blood dripped from Aiden’s forehead and when he barred his teeth at his uncle in rage, I recognized it immediately as his response before he does something terrible. Victor must have noticed it too because he swiped the cane at Aiden’s side and knocked it into his back right before he kicked him in the back of his knees, sending him sprawling to the ground.

“Don’t even bother getting up. You know the drill. Stay on your knees, take off your shirt and prepare yourself.”

Prepare for what? I asked myself and wished that I had not because Víctor took out a terrifying looking whip from his desk that had me biting my lip hard to stop herself from screaming and as he wrapped the whip around his hand, I realized that he was going to whip him.

Again.

“When will you ever stop being such a burden and disappointment to me, Aiden?”

“Cut the theatrics and stop pretending that you are not doing this for your own sick pleasure. So get on the f**k with it and stop wasting my time. There is something important that I would like to get back to and you’re wasting my goddamn time.” Aiden said with a bitter sneer that I also recognized as his signature look and I was shaking my head as if he could see me begging him to not anger his uncle even further as if that would somehow stop what I knew was about to happen.

Victor gripped his chin and when he gave Aiden a seemingly affectionate gaze I wanted to truly believe that he would reconsider but there was nothing affectionate about his grip because Aiden winced in pain as blood dripped from his lips

Victor gripped his chin and when he gave Aiden a seemingly affectionate gaze I wanted to truly believe that he would reconsider but there was nothing affectionate about his grip because Aiden winced in pain as blood dripped from his lips

Coercion, I realized. Victor was using his powers as alpha on Aiden.

“You are weak, pathetic and you would have died a long time ago if you did not have me looking out for you. Whether you like it or not I am your last remaining family. Believe what you want but I don’t do this because I like to hurt you. No on the contrary, I do it because I love you and want to make sure that you are corrected.”

And before Aiden could even reply, he lashed him twice on his back, the slap of the whip echoing throughout the room and I realized that I had bitten my lip so hard to keep from screaming that I was now bleeding.

Aiden let out an anguished howl, his shadows appearing and taken the shape of a thousand sharp spikes pointing at his uncle. His uncle didn't even look dazed by the fact that he was literally surrounded by shadow spikes that I was sure was deadly.

"Go on, Aiden," he urged, c*****g his head, a mocking glint in his eyes. "Kill me. Lose the one family that has always stood by your side even when your own parents wanted to discard you when they couldn't take it anymore. You nearly killed your own mother at birth so it should not be so hard to do it." He said in a patronizing tone that made me want to hurl and for once I knew that if Aiden went through with it I would not blame him but he remained where he was, trembling with his head bowed and tears rolling down his cheeks, unable to do it.

Suddenly annoyed, he kicked Aiden hard in the ribs. "Do it!" Kick. "Do it!" Kick. "Kill me!" He was grinning wide now, amusement dancing in his eyes as he kicked Aiden over and over again.

Why won't he fight back? Why won't he kill him? He can do it. He can kill him if he wants. And this house must be twisting my morals because here I was, rooting for him to kill his own uncle. He deserves it. He can do it.

"I- I can't-" Aiden coughed, rising on all fours, his limbs trembling with the weight of his body. "I can't do it."

"That's what I thought." Víctor scoffed and backhanded Aiden, sending him sprawling.

"Get up, you pathetic worm and accept the punishment for your actions like a man."

I watched in horror as Aiden got into position again. This time, he didn't try to fight back as the whip came down on his back. I watched every blow he took, every flinch he made, every sound he uttered, unable to look anymore I closed my eyes hard, tears streaming down my cheeks but that didn't block out the horrible sounds and Aiden's grunts.

I had once thought that I would be delighted to see this, I thought that I'd be glad that Aiden had a much worse life than I could have ever imagined, a life that was even worse than mine, but all I felt right now was pain on his behalf.

The worst thing for me was the cold, dead look in Aiden's eyes as he wiped away his tears and took the blows. I realized with fear that no matter how bad I thought Aiden was before, the possibility that he could become so much worse the longer he stays under his uncle's care was even greater. And it terrified me. It terrified me more than I could ever imagine.