

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 91

Lily's POV

Even though the rest of the ride was filled with comfortable silence from Ren who seemed to be resolved about the proposal that he made to me and light conversation between Rhea and Chelsea, my mind could not still seem to get over the fact that this mate thing was happening and that it was real.

And would Ren really still be able to love me if I could not reject my mate? Would that be fair to him? He was leaving his mate to be with me. Even though it's under different circumstances, I should be able to do the same. I wanted to be with him more than anything and I knew that the only way to know if it was possible was to first find my mate.

The ride to the school was smooth and swift regardless of my tumultuous thoughts and when the limo pulled up at school, there were many people outside and even though I knew that they could not see into the car, I felt a little queasy and anxious to get out of the car. I knew that tongues would wag the moment they saw me stepping out of the limousine and I was already planning to find a way to sneak when the car took a turn and pulled into a private garage.

"For the royals," Chelsea mouthed and I nodded. Of course, the royals had a private parking space. What I would have given to be born with a silver spoon, a small part of me thought as Ren took my hand and helped me out of the car, Rhea and Chelsea coming out through the other side to see Zac and Chase waiting for us, leaning against their cars.

Chase smirked at his sister first who rolled her eyes and when his eyes landed on Rhea, they softened almost immediately. I watched Rhea fiddle with the hem of her skirt, the tension between them almost palpable.

"Hey, man." He finally said, exchanging a handshake with Ren who went back to holding my hand, the warm feeling making me giddy inside.

"Happy birthday, Lily." Chase said to me with a bright smile that was always easy to return and I grinned.

"Thank you very much. Do you also happen to have a gift for me perhaps? I mean, a girl can dream."

Nodding, he brought a gift bag that I didn't realize he had been hiding behind him with this free hand and handed it to me.

When I opened it, it was a bottle of champagne and when I looked back up at him with a smile, he shrugged.

"I mean, now you're officially an adult and you obviously can't take that on school grounds but I was hoping that you could get to open it later at your party which thankfully I was invited to, so I will be seeing you there."

"Thank you. And yes, please come." I replied, glancing at Chelsea with a smile that I hoped conveyed my gratitude that she was able to put away her on/off feud with her brother to tell Bia to invite him to the party that she was throwing on my behalf. Even though I had wanted something small, the more the merrier and I could not wait to see what was going to happen tonight.

"I'll walk you to class." Chase said more to Rhea than Chelsea and even though Rhea's face looked like she would refuse, she nodded and the three of them headed inside.

It felt like the temperature in the garage dropped a significant number of degrees when Zac finally appeared in front of me and I didn't even realize that I was holding my breath until he spoke.

"Happy birthday, duchess." He whispered and I nodded, managing to give him a nervous smile.

"Thanks." I smiled up at him, even though he was the last person I expected to be wishing me a happy birthday.

For once, he had a sincere smile on his face, his eyes almost warm and tender.

"I'd like to give you your gift. Can you come with me?"

I looked at his outstretched hand and turned to look at Ren, asking him with my eyes if he didn't mind, especially because Zac had behaved like Ren was not even standing there, making me wonder if something was going on between them.

They seemed a bit frosty with each other.

Ren's gaze softened and he nodded, indicating that I could go and I was about to let go of his hand when he pulled me close and kissed me deeply. My legs trembled and buckled and I would have fallen over if his arms weren't around my waist as he slipped his tongue into my mouth, cracking me open and tasting me, deepening the kiss. The butterflies in my stomach were throwing a goddamn party at this point.

"I'll be right behind you," he whispered as he kissed my forehead and allowed me to walk away.

I could see the annoyance on Zac's face as he led me away from the garage into an empty hallway and I told myself that it wasn't because he was jealous.

He could not actually want me that way right? Even though the past few days with him has been confusing, he probably just thinks of me as the annoying almost girlfriend of his best friend he has to play nice with, even though I reminded him of his evil ex.

"Watch your step," he murmured and I almost jumped out of my body when he placed a gentle hand on the small of my back, guiding me into the infamous elevator that was only to be used by the royals.

"Where are we going?" I asked as he pressed the button to take us to the top floor.

Some of the old Zac I knew and recognized peeked out as he flashed me one of his cocky grins. "You'll see."

I noticed he tried to stay as far away from me as he could on the elevator, a tightness in his back and shoulders as he kept swallowing and raking his hand through his already messy black hair.

When we arrived at our destination, he led me down a hallway and into a small dark room he opened with his own key.

He led me into the room and as he stopped in the dark, I noticed that I didn't feel scared at all when I used to literally panic if he was in the area.

When did I start to trust Zac wholeheartedly?

When he turned on the lights, I realized that we were in a cozy music room and I was standing right in the center, surrounded by different musical instruments. My lips parted slightly in awe.

“Ren has his art room, Aiden has a reading space in the library and we all have the basement lounge where we hang out together. This... this is my hideaway.”

“It’s beautiful.” I answered, turning to look at him. “Can you play every instrument here?”

He placed a hand on his chest, putting on a good show of being offended and I bit back my smile at how adorable he was.

“You think I’d show off this place if I didn’t know how to play everything here? I can play all thirty instruments you can see here.”

“Impressive,” I laughed, suddenly feeling giddy as I went to the acoustic guitar and touched a string. “Play something for me? It is my birthday.”

“I’ll play anything you want, duchess, but first, your gift.”

My eyes glittered. “You got me a gift?”

“What? You thought I wouldn’t?”

I... Yes, actually but I didn’t say that out loud because he was already offended by the thought that I wouldn’t expect anything from him.

“I was going to get you a new phone to replace your old junk, but Ren beat me to it. So... Here you go,” he said, bringing out a package and unwrapping it to reveal an iPod with a wired earpiece.

He took my hand and I ignored the way my body tingled as he placed the iPod on my palm.

“I know you’re into retro s**t and the iPod is already filled with some of my favorites. I hope you enjoy it.”

Eyes welling with tears, I nodded and immediately plugged my ears to scan through the playlist and I looked up in surprise, my smile wide because we had similar tastes.

I looked up to thank him and saw that he was smiling, his gaze soft and I momentarily ran out of words to say.

“Thank you, Zac.”

“That’s just one of your gifts,” he laughed, taking my hand and leading me towards the balcony.

I placed my hands on the railing, breathless for a moment as I realized just how high up we were. We were so high, I could almost see all of Shadow Cove from here, the boundaries of the four distinct packs that surrounded the capital were unique in their own right. I bet if I squint hard enough, I can see my home from here.

I’ve never been this high up before and the euphoric feeling and the wind blowing in my hair made me feel lighter. Free-er.

“Zac, look!” I cried excitedly, wanting him to see what I was seeing, without taking into account that if this was his little hideaway, he was already too used to the scenery to be breathtaken by it.

“Hmm?”

I nearly tumbled over the railing, onto the green lawn below us.

I didn’t realize how close we were until I heard him right behind me, and even now, I could feel his body heat, the ghost of his chest grazing my back.

“Zac?” I swallowed as he stroked my hair gently, gathering it in his hand and expertly packing it into a messy bun behind my head.

“Relax duchess. Your pulse is driving me crazy.”

I could feel the rumble of his chest against my back and kept still as he placed something small and delicate around my neck-

Oh, that’s what it was. A necklace. A little diamond pendant. My gift. Of course. What the hell was I thinking? He was just standing close to me because he wanted to put it on for me.

But... Why isn’t he stepping back?

I swallowed as his fingertips grazed my collarbone, sparks dancing across every nerve ending on my skin cells. "Don't take it off," he said, right beside my ear and all I could do was nod like an idiot, my sensors had probably overloaded and crashed a long time ago.

"You know," he said, putting an arm on either side of me and grabbing onto the railing, so that I was trapped in his semi embrace. "I've never lost control since I got turned. That time at the club was a mistake. I never want to let you see that side of me again."

"It's fine." I sounded like a dying crow, my throat tight and sore. "Really. I'm no longer bothered by it."

"You should." And he suddenly placed his nostrils on my racing pulse and I froze as he inhaled deeply, a cold tingle, shooting up my spine when he let out a groan. "I'm barely holding myself back. You have no idea how dangerous it is to be here with me, alone, without Ren to protect you. You have no idea how much effort it's taking to pull myself into the semblance of a decent human being for you."

"You don't scare me, Zac," I said softly, "not anymore. I trust you. You won't hurt me."

His teeth scraped my erratic pulse and I almost exploded into a new star. Thankfully, his fangs remained sheathed.

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"I don't want to hurt you, Lily." He whispered harshly. "I want to devour you."

I gasped and turned around to face him.

I shouldn't have turned around to face him.

His face. His eyes. Hungry. Wild. He was breathing heavily, desperate restraint clear on his face.

I'm barely holding myself back. I want to devour you.

For once, he didn't have that charming look on his face that felt like armour. He seemed distraught, wild, ravenous and yet, so hesitant, an emotion that I

had never seen on him as he reached out to tuck stray strands of hair behind my ear. And when I didn't stop him, he leaned in to press a light kiss to my ear that made my entire body tremble.

When he pulled back, his dark eyes like pools of darkness were so intense and I felt almost hypnotized by him.

"Your blood. Your scent. You don't even realize how much you drive me crazy. There's something about you Lily, something that my body, my wolf just responds to."

I could hear the glogh glogh glogh of my heart pounding erratically in my chest. But it wasn't loud enough to drown out his words.

"I tried to stop, tried to not want you, I thought I'd get myself in a few days. I thought the insomnia, the nightmares will stop... but it only gets worse."

"Zac..."

He shook his head. "I never should have tasted you if I was going to become a f*****g addict over it. I never should have... f**k! Ever since I had a taste, you're all I want. All I crave. It's like something changed. At first, I thought that all I wanted was your blood, but the longer I stay with you, I realize that it's not just that."

"I want you. All of you. I want these moments, just us. Just me and you. Your smiles, the light in your eyes, your smart mouth. I want every one of them. I didn't realize when it happened but... I've started to think of you as mine. Mine to protect. To care for."

He raised a shaky hand to brush my hair out of my forehead and then leaned in so close that our lips nearly touched. "I know that it's probably too late to be making any requests... but if you don't find your mate in the end, I want you to choose me. I'll be good. I'll be so good to you, I promise. I'll be whatever you want me to be. Your friend. Your protector... your lover. Your mate. Just... choose me. Please."

My brain must have picked itself up and left a while ago because it took me a few seconds to feel the effect of his words.

He wanted me. Zac Talaverra wanted me.

But... does he really?

“Zac...” I said quietly. “I’m not Callista.”

“This isn’t about Callista.”

“It is, though. From the first moment we met, it’s been about her.”

“And I will never forgive myself for what I put you through.”

“You see me as her replacement, do you not? Since you couldn’t have her, it’s only fair that her doppelganger takes her place.”

“Lily-“

“I’m sorry,” I said, looking up at him and his face broke into a thousand tiny pieces.

I put my hands on his chest, pushing him away from me, putting a considerable amount of space between us even as his words made my heart pound hard.

“I’m my own person, with my own life and choices.”

He grabbed my arm, desperate gaze burning into mine. “Don’t you think I know that? You’re nothing like her. I never want you to be anything like her. I want you. You, Lily Beauregard. You’re the one I want.”

“And what about what I want?”

His hands went limp at his sides.

“I’ve already made my choice and my choice is Ren. I’m sorry, Zac.”

It’s true. I meant what I said but why did something in me die a little? Why did my voice tremble with uncertainty?

What’s worse was that a little part of me was entertaining his offer, wondering if it was possible to keep both him and Ren and not pick one over the other. They were two very different people but somehow I felt drawn to them. Attracted to both of them. Like a moth to flame.

And what did that make me? An ungrateful cheat.

Horrified by my thoughts, I rushed out of the room, heaving a sigh of relief when I saw Ren standing outside, leaning against the wall.

His gaze softened as he looked at me, “Lily...” he whispered, pushing himself off the wall. He spread his arms. “Come here.”

I ran into his waiting arms and breathed in his scent deeply as he engulfed me into a hug.

I’m sorry. I’m sorry. You’re so good to me, and yet... yet...

Ren’s heart was racing wildly. I looked up to see that he was glaring hard at someone and turned to see Zac watching us, a broken look on his face.

Of course, Ren must have read his thoughts and figured out what he had done. What had happened between us... what I had allowed to happen between us.

I can’t let them have an altercation over this. I wasn’t worth being fought over and even though my heart skipped several beats at wanting to fix everything, I took Ren’s hand and let him lead me away.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 92

Lily’s pov

Zac’s confession, his touch, the whisper of his kisses... all of it haunted me throughout the rest of the day.

I spent the entire day restless and I wanted to say that it was because of Zac’s confession in the morning messing up my mental balance, because his words still seemed to haunt me, follow me everywhere during classes and echo in my ears at random times... but this restlessness, this anxiety, it was more than that.

There was something else making me feel a healthy mix of nervousness and excitement. Something that I could not quite put my finger on and I hoped and prayed that it had nothing to do with my mate being around or in the school.

Ren, on the other hand had been nothing but sweet all day and a tad bit evasive, stylishly going around all of the questions that I had asked about my

party and sneaking out to make phone calls that I was sure were to Bia who was also keeping her lips sealed about what today was going to look like.

I thought it was absolutely adorable that he was planning this surprise for me and putting in all of this effort into making sure that whatever they were planning meant well but I didn't think that he realized that even if he didn't throw me a party, get me gifts or plan a nice surprise, my love for him was already overflowing. He had already done so much for me and I could not imagine what my life would have been if I did not have Ren's love and support these past couple of weeks.

I shivered as darkness crept into my heart, into my memories. A sliver of the life I had before Ren came into my life with all his light and hope. I immediately shook it off and went back to working on my chemistry report.

Time rolled around for the end of the day and the restlessness in my chest became almost impossible to ignore. Chucking it up to anxiety for the party tonight, I decided to make my way to the library and quickly read something since I was supposed to go shopping with Rhea and Chelsea when school closed and they were currently busy with cheerleading practice.

Ren had already told me that he had some extra arrangements to make and it was so cute to see him struggle to not confess that his plans were related to my birthday. I was only too happy to put him out of his misery of having to explain himself to me.

Walking into the library, I took a minute to admire how large and vast this place was, compared to the library at Gold crest and how lucky I was to have gotten a shot to be here and it further strengthened my resolve to continue to do what it took to remain here and pursue my dreams.

Especially now that things seemed to have settled down and I was finally finding my place here.

I was excited and could not wait for this evening to come and I walked towards a book shelf to grab a book when I felt something that made my hand pause mid air. Confused for a moment, I ignored the feeling and proceeded to pick up the book but then I felt it again, even stronger. It was like an itch that needed to be scratched badly, a pull that was trying to lead me somewhere.

Unable to ignore or resist it, I let the urge lead me a little deeper into the library, venturing into a corner that I didn't even know existed in this ginormous space.

My heart was beating wildly, my pulse thrumming uncontrollably and it felt like my entire body was getting primed for something, excited for whatever was at that corner and I could not even resist the urge to quickly follow the itch to discover what had such control over me.

As I made a right, the scent of someone familiar hit me, triggering all sorts of memories almost immediately and the expensive masculine sophisticated scent made my mouth dry up because I recognized who it was. I knew who was in that corner before I even saw him. Aiden.

Immediately, I tried to stop moving, wanting to be nowhere around him, but it was like my body had a mind of its own and it kept pulling me even further in that direction until I burst out into an area that I could only describe as a crib.

There was a nest of books piled up on each other on the table in front of the comfy armchair and I was expecting to find Aiden doing something dark and devious, completely nasty and horrific to the eyes like hurting or humiliating someone but I stopped dead in my tracks when I found him doing nothing of the sort.

Sleeping.

The cruel prince of darkness was asleep.

He was coiled up like a baby on the armchair, sound asleep with a purple blanket nearly slipping off of him and I could not deny that he looked like the most attractive, peaceful person that I had ever seen in my eyes.

To my horror, even when I tried to blink away the sudden surge of attraction, I realized with sorrow that I could not, the pull forcing me to admit the one thing that had scared me all day.

I had found my mate and it was none other than the one person in the entire world that I could never have imagined it would be.

A lot of emotions swirled inside me, from anger to fear and the most damning of all, aching need to be with him. And as if that was not punishment enough, he stirred in his sleep, his eyes suddenly flying open and now we were both

staring at each other, his eyes widening in recognition as he muttered the one word that I did not want to ever hear from his mouth.

“Mate.”

“No” I gasped, hiding behind a bookshelf and pressed my hand to my mouth to make sure that I did not make a sound. Closing my eyes tight, I wished that this was a dream. That this was just a nightmare that I could wake up from now.

Did the goddess really not hear my prayers? Because if she did, then why this? Why him? Of all people? It couldn't be. It could not be.

Aiden suddenly appeared in front of me and even though I wanted to ignore him, the immediate pull had my eyes flying open to see that instead of anger and repulsion at the fact that we were mates, he actually looked genuinely elated.

“Can you feel it too? You can feel it, can't you, Lily? It's the mating bond. It's singing to the two of us and what a wonderful song it is.” He whispered, trying to take my hand but I slapped his hand away and forced my body to listen to my mind as I pulled away from him immediately.

“Feel it? Yes but I don't want it. I don't want anything to do with someone like you.”

His eyes turned alarmed and he placed his arms on either side of my head, eyes of stardust burning into mine as he pinned me against the shelf. His dark grey eyes roamed over my face, looking so vulnerable, I wanted to believe that he was a different person.

“If this is about your home, I had nothing to do with the vandalism or releasing those videos either. You have to believe me.”

My anger snapped and I pushed him away, screaming.

“So what do you want? A hug? A pat on the back? Acceptance? Does that change the fact that you remain the same person that hurts everyone, even those close to you?”

I didn't want to... i didn't want to cry, but damn it, the water works exploded out of me, as if I couldn't stop myself, the awful memories came slamming back into me with full force. Memories I thought that I had healed from.

"You put a target on my back on my first day here for no reason. You blamed me for a crime that I didn't commit. I was hurt, beaten and assaulted at your command. Hunted like a common thief. I was almost raped on my first day here. And it was all." Shove. "Your." Shove. "Fault!" I was hacking up a lung, breathing erratically. A painful sob was stuck in my chest. My lungs felt like they were collapsing in on me, even as I glared at him. The cause of my pain in this academy. The orchestrator of my misery.

He had the audacity to look shocked. To look offended. "Lily-"

"You hurt me every chance you get. You get a kick out of seeing me in pain, in tears. You forced me to go down on you for your own pleasure. For your own sick game!" I shook my head to fight off the awful memories swarming back. The shame, the pain and humiliation. "I wanted to kill myself, Aiden. Did you know that?"

He clenched his teeth, eyes going a darker shade of grey like worn tombstones and dying stars.

"Does this turn you on?" I asked, mockingly, glaring at him through my tears. "Do my tears make you happy?"

"Lily-" he reached out to me and I stepped back.

"You think because of this foolish bond, I'm supposed to forget all of that? You think I'll accept you with open arms so you can ruin my life once and for all? You've never respected or cared for me and I should believe that you want to now? I refuse to be with someone like you, mate or not. I will never agree to be mated to a monster like you, Aiden Vanderbilt. I would rather die!"

I had never seen someone look so hurt in my entire life but the hopeful look on Aiden's face quickly vanished, all his emotions turning sour, his chest heaving as he gazed up at the ceiling, tucked his tongue against his cheek, counted under his breath. And then, he stared at me coldly.

"Fine." He whispered.

I swallowed.

“Run then, Lily.” He said, his voice, taking on a deadly edge that raised the hairs on the back of my neck. The cold, dead look in his eyes spelled a promise. A threat. “Run, and don’t stop running because if I catch you, nothing is going to stop me from claiming you. You are mine, no one else’s. Not Ren’s. Not Zac’s. Mine. And you will be mine. I’ll make sure of it.”

My heart stopped at the threat. My blood going cold. I fisted my trembling hands, an angry sob stuck in my throat.

Of course. What was I expecting? He’d never change.

I turned around and fled the library, running as fast as my legs could carry me.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 93

Lily’s pov:

“Can you feel it too? You can feel it, can’t you, Lily? It’s the mating bond. It’s singing to the two of us and what a wonderful song it is.”

What a beautiful song it was indeed, only that it was only a few seconds before my entire world fell apart at the realization of who my mate was.

Staring at myself in the mirror, I frowned, trying to calm my retching gut and racing heart.

The first thing I did as soon as I ran into the bathroom was throw up all the lunch I’d had. Even though I was far away from the library, it felt like my lungs were about to stop functioning as I replayed how I had just found out what I had spent the entire week dreading; who my mate was.

Aiden freaking Vanderbilt. Of all people.

This has to be a mistake. The goddess must have a very dark, very wicked sense of humor.

With shaky hands, I texted Rhea informing her that I was going to be canceling the shopping date and sent Ren a message to come and pick me up, knowing that wherever he was, he was going to find his way to me once he got my text. I did not bother to explain why I was changing my plans because I was not even ready to accept this news, not to talk of letting others

know about the fact that the most terrifying of all the princes in Shadow cove happened to be my mate.

I hated how my body longed for him, hated how his face had looked so appealing, how his threats had made me feel like I was truly going to lose my mind.

I hated that I could finally place what I had felt for him when I went down on him even though he blackmailed me. There was a word for it now and I was even so ashamed to admit it.

Attraction. Lust. Full blown lust. Joy that I was not mate less after all.

I could not even begin to imagine what he would do to me if he ever caught me, but I would never let that happen. Because Aiden was many things, but above all, he was someone who kept his word. Whatever he says he'd do is what he'd do. And I knew that if he caught me, he would claim me, whether I wanted it or not. I hated that a part of me was even already considering the idea of us being mates. Of being forced to be mates.

I must really be losing my mind.

That, or my wolf must really despise me. The b***h hadn't bothered to make herself known to me all these years, until it was time to imprint on my biggest enemy. Even now, she remained deathly silent, taking her sweet time watching me slowly spiral into madness.

Quickly heading out of the bathroom immediately some girls rushed in and I quickly left, not wanting to draw attention to myself. I started running as fast as my legs could carry, heading to the private garage to hide out there until Ren found me and I did not realize how fast I was running, not until I rounded a corner and slammed into somebody who still seemed to have those judgemental eyes and pretentious smile.

It was Mauve that was staring back at me with a smile that on her face and my heart stopped in my chest.

The news had already circulated around school that Ren had rejected Mauve and that their bond was broken officially so I didn't even understand why Mauve was smiling at me, given that I knew from the anger in her gaze that she blamed me for the break in the bond.

It's not like Ren and I were even being lowkey with our public displays of affection.

She must hate me... almost as much as I was now wary of her.

Quickly backtracking, I murmured an apology and was about to leave when she stopped me again.

"Are you alright? Looking for Ren perhaps?" She asked and I shook my head, feeling suddenly apprehensive even though she had just asked a question, an innocent smile plastered on her face.

"I want to pee and then find Ren, but I'll be okay. Thank you." I replied, Making my way back to the bathroom.

Turning around, I froze when I saw two boys blocking my path, both of them wearing sinister smiles on their faces.

I turned around to look at Mauve, my pulse, racing.

"Whatever you're trying to do, stop it." I warned.

She placed a dainty hand on her lips and giggled. "Me, but I'm not trying to do anything. It's them you should be worried about."

The last thing I remember as I tried to turn around was Mauve's menacing smile that was up to no good, right as I was knocked unconscious.

"Get me her phone. Let's make sure no one's looking for her until I'm done with her." Was the last thing I heard as I fell unconscious.

Aiden's pov

"So what do you want? A hug? A pat on the back? Acceptance?"

Her hateful sneer twisted my guts. Her words, driving a knife through my chest.

"I was hurt, beaten and bullied at your command. Hunted like a common thief. I was almost raped on my first day here. And it was all. Your. Fault!"

I couldn't do anything to stop it because they were true. Her accusations were all true.

And as for those boys that had tried to rape her... I was going to find those assholes and f*****g splay them.

“I wanted to kill myself, Aiden. Did you know that?”

No. No. I didn't know. The consequences of my actions were not something I had ever considered in my life... until a few minutes ago... when someone that was meant to be the most important person in my life opened my eyes to it.

If Lily had killed herself... It was like losing a part of me. No wonder Nyx had gone berserk on that Tate guy when Ren revealed his history with Lily.

To think that I was no better... I had pushed her to think those thoughts...

“I refuse to be with someone like you, mate or not. I will never agree to be mated to a monster like you, Aiden Vanderbilt. I would rather d i e !”

Her words had broken something in me. My heart threatened to rip out of my chest. I could not imagine how much more devastating it would be for me to get rejected.

What would happen if she decided that she didn't want me in her life at all and could not get past what a person that I was?

Her words kept replaying in my head like a broken record and the more the words played, the more horrible I felt about everything because the mating bond had attacked me like a stab to the chest, making me feel her pain. I could sense all of her emotions. Every single one.

Her emotions were so strong, filled with so much rage, hate and sorrow that it had almost sent me to my knees.

And instead of me to acknowledge her, to assure her that I was not trying to harm her anymore, I had decided to do what I always do best; make matters worse. Destroy what was in my path.

I decided to threaten her, something that would not earn me any extra points in her books. Besides, while I would never have to force a woman to be with me, a small part of me was still very satisfied with my choice of words.

Not claiming Lily was not an option for me. I needed my mate more than she needed me, not only because she was my kryptonite but because Night Shade men were more prone to going feral without their mates by their sides. Toeing the edge between madness and sanity was going to get the better of me one of these days, and the only thing that can keep me grounded, keep my wolf tethered to sanity, was my mate.

And I had gone and ruined it.

I hated myself so much for this bad habit of wanting to hurt back anyone who hurts me first. I had only said those words to scare her, to be the one doing the hurting and even though it had effectively produced the desired effect, what was the point? I only felt even worse thinking about it.

I buried my face in my hands, cursing myself.

I don't know how long I stayed like that, wallowing and contemplating.

Suddenly, I felt soft hands on my hair and Nyx stirred in revulsion.

I looked up to glare at Paige who didn't pay my rage to mind as she settled on my lap, her slim arms going around my neck.

"Are you up for tonight?" She whispered against my ears and I grabbed her arm, forcing her to look at me.

"We're not doing this anymore."

Ice blue eyes widened perceptively. "What do you mean?"

"I've found my mate. Our arrangement is over."

She froze. "What do you mean by that? Who is she?"

"Are you questioning me right now?" I asked coldly.

"N- no. I just meant-"

"Get up."

She rose to her feet. "What I mean is, I'm the one for you. I get you in a way no other girl would. It's not every girl that can stomach the darkness you have in you, Aiden. But I don't mind. I don't fear you. I love you."

“What?” I asked in rage, looking at her as if she had gone insane.

“I know, I know. Our arrangement was simple. It was just supposed to be about s*x. I wasn’t supposed to want anything more but I’ve always thought we looked perfect together. I’m supposed to be queen of this school. Me, not Mauve. It’s only right I rule by your side and stop acting like her pathetic underling. I’m the Beta’s daughter. My father is your uncle’s trusted right hand man. I’m meant for you, Aiden.”

“Have you gone insane?” I asked, my voice low, standing up to tower over her.

She swallowed but refused to back down. “Admit it. There’s no other girl in all of Shadow Cove that will get you like I do. There’s nobody else meant for you. It’s me, Aiden. Me.”

“Listen to me, you deluded simpleton. I’ve already told you that there was nothing to it from the start but it seems like your pathetic brain can’t comprehend simple facts. You were nothing more than a disposable plaything, a convenient distraction to pass the time. How you managed to convince yourself that you could ever be the one for me is beyond me.”

She stepped back, her hurt and fear seeping into my soul as Nyx lapped it up like it was his favourite dinner.

“I c- I can’t believe this.” She was sweating. Hyperventilating. Hysterical. “What do you mean? How could things change? I’m yours Aiden. You only kept coming back to me. ME! I was the one constant in your life. How can you say you felt nothing?!”

“You’re really dumb, aren’t you, Paige?”

“Who is she?” She growled. “You’ve gone to school with everyone at this academy since we were f*****g kids. The only person that has recently been admitted is...” She froze with the sudden realization.

“Her?” She asked, disgusted. “The traitor’s daughter? Gold Crest’s reject? That dumb f*****g b-“

My hand closed around her throat as I lifted her up, stopping her mid tirade. “Finish those words about my mate and it will be the last words you ever speak.”

“Ngchkkkngh.”

I squeezed harder around her slender neck. “I am alpha, and with it comes a superiority that you will never understand. My mate is chosen to be my equal in everything, that places her far above in the hierarchy than you will ever be. I suggest you learn some respect before I am forced to teach it to you.”

“Aid- Aiden-” she wheezed, her face turning purple.

“Let me make this perfectly clear once and for all: I don’t want you. I have never wanted you. And I certainly don’t care about the fantasy you’ve built in that head of yours. You were foolish to believe that we could ever be anything more. Now, take your pathetic delusions elsewhere and leave me alone. Find someone else who might actually tolerate your delusions. But don’t fool yourself into thinking it will ever be me.”

I dropped her and she fell to the ground, holding her neck and wheezing.

“Oh, and Paige,” She looked up at me with fearful eyes and tear stained cheeks. “Mention one word about our history to Lily and I will rip out your voice box myself.”

I turned and walked away, deciding to just f**k it and leave school already.

It was already getting dark as I sat in my car, my nerves thrumming with anxiety.

I’ve given her enough time. I should go looking for her now.

What if I show up at her door? Would she let me in? Ren had told me she’s staying with her human friend. I should get her something...

But what if she freaks out? What if she lashes out and rejects me?

I raked an anxious hand through my hair, confused on what to do.

Deciding to busy myself with my phone, my throat dried up when I saw the snaps and all I could see were them still trying to get more gifts for Lily. There were videos and videos of my friends setting up Lily’s party, her gifts, decorations, all that s**t.

Envy and rage boiled in my blood as I squeezed my phone hard in my grasp.

What felt even more hurtful was seeing Zac and Ren included in these videos. The both of them were in the same place and had both invited to celebrate with her. How could they be doing this behind my back? I was the one that was supposed to be invited. I wanted to celebrate this special day with her. She should be sharing this day with me! Not with Ren, not with anyone else. With me!

Dragging a restless hand through my hair, I could not stop thinking about how it had felt so right to be so close to her, to pull her into my arms for one short, sweet moment. How her scent had messed with my entire head and how much I wished she was mine.

And yet, two friends that I called brothers had decided to take what was mine from me? Those traitors had dared to covet what was mine?

f**k no. They were going to pay.

I guarantee it.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 94

Mauve's pov

"I used to be the prettiest thing in the school, do you know that?" I said, to no one in particular because the only person that could have answered was lying still, unconscious on Paige's bed. If it wasn't for the rise and fall of her chest, I would have thought that she was dead.

I wished she was dead.

Lily Beauregard. The girl who was responsible for my sudden and swift decline. The person who walked into Shadow cove academy and ruined my entire life just by existing.

Her eyes fluttered close and I wanted to barf at how angry I felt.

She was wearing a new uniform today and better shoes. It had to be Ren. It had to be him. He was so used to rescuing strays, to caring for the less privileged and saving those who he thought were beyond redemption.

I guessed that was why when he started to have this sort of fascination with her, I didn't bother because I thought she was just another charity case. I thought she was like me.

Ren had cared for me once. He had never loved me, but his sense of duty had been strong and steadfast in our bond and I had known that he would keep trying to make us work solely because of his values. He wanted the mating bond desperately, to prove to everyone that at least, he could do one thing right.

In the relationship, his gentle selflessness was what I loved the most about him. And now that was all gone. Vanished. And it was thanks to one person.

"Even though I was the prettiest, I used to think that there was something about the brotherhood bit because Ren, Zac and even Aiden were not attracted to me. Not even in the slightest. And I can promise you that it was not from lack of trying." I sighed and played with a strand of her hair. "So tell me, why are you somehow involved with all three of them? What are you telling them? What are you saying to them that I did not say? And why does Ren want to stay with you?" I whispered the last part, hating how it was so easy for her to get everything that I had used years to work for.

What did Ren see in her that he didn't see in me? What did Zac? Aiden?

I clenched my fists.

Fighting the urge to scream my lungs out, I sat on the chair, hating the hollow feeling in my chest that was a reminder of how I had found myself here right now, with a kidnapping case on my hands.

Ren had done what I thought he would never be able to do and Lily was responsible for all of it.

I clenched a fist to my chest as I remembered how I had woken up two nights ago and thought I was having sleep paralysis. I could not talk, could not move and felt like I was trapped in my own mind. Not a single limb would move at my command, I was stuck in a deep exhale and slowly running out of oxygen.

Panicking, I managed to lower my gaze to find someone sitting in the dark on the chair beside my bed, his cold eyes illuminated by the rays of moonlight entering the room.

“Who is that? Who are you?” I thought in my head, realizing with horror that I could not move my mouth but then again I did not need to because the stranger rose from the chair and walked towards the bed and I saw his face.

Silver white hair, that ethereal fae beauty that made him the prettiest boy I have ever met, light brown eyes that seemed to glow with a predatory glint in the dark.

It was Ren. But there was no trace of the kind, soft hearted boy that I knew.

The last time I had seen him had been at his house, a few hours ago, when I created a scene and stormed out, halting the rejection ceremony that he had planned behind my back.

“You disrespected my mother in front of members of the council. Disrespected our family name,” he sighed, stepping closer to me and looking down at me with a frigid, ruthless gaze. “Bad move, Mauve.”

I tried to talk. Tried to breathe. I couldn't.

He touched something on my dresser, fiddled with one of the countless expensive gifts he had bought for me. Gifts I displayed on my dresser, to brag about for all my friends to see.

“Hm, I thought you threw this out. This too. I see you kept my letters. Burn them. Or better still, I'll be taking these-“

He was practically talking to himself now, taking his sweet time as if he wasn't holding me hostage.

My lungs hurt. My cells were crying out in pain. I was struggling to exhale but my lungs were not cooperating.

Suddenly, he pulled out a small stool, sat beside the bed and watched me quietly in a way that, for the first time, truly terrified me.

I always knew that he was powerful, but unlike Zac and Aiden who had the heart and stomach for cruelty, Ren had never given any inclination that he was capable of evil. Right now, though, he looked ready to cause harm. Cold, calculated murder.

His eyes were bored and detached as he leaned closer to me and I could only look at him, knowing that he was the reason why I was paralyzed.

“Did you know that with just one snap of my fingers, all of the air in your lungs will slowly leave until there is nothing left? I don’t need to lift a finger to snuff out your life so that I can finally be free of you. All I need to do is keep you in this position for three more minutes.”

He was toying with me. Getting a rise out of my fear and panic. Like a cat, playing with its food.

Even if I wanted to answer any of his questions, I could not, the air from my lungs gradually seeping out as he maintained eye contact with me and it felt like my lungs were no longer my own. I started feeling dizzy and my entire body trembled as I struggled to keep my eyes, the only part of my body that he left under my control open.

My lungs squeezed harder and terror like never before engulfed me as I realized that Ren would actually kill me if I did not let him go.

“Now, I am going to release you and you will take my hand and repeat the words after me, Mauve. You will do it because you know that keeping me in this sham of a mate bond will only end with one or the both of us dead. Do you understand?”

When I nodded, I felt his hold on me disappear and even though I knew I could move if I wanted to, I remained still, tears trickling down my cheeks as he started to speak the words and I said them after him and when we were done, he whispered the final words that broke my heart into a million pieces.

“I accept the rejection.”

My entire body shook with sorrow as he pressed a soft kiss to my forehead. A crack the size of an earthquake fissured my heart, it felt like something was ripping out my soul.

As he walked out of the door, I watched him pause and I thought he was about to come back and kill me after all but he only spoke.

“For what it’s worth,” he sighed, “I wish things had been different. I wish you did not have to make me resort to this but thank you for cooperating with me.”

My fists clenched around my blanket as venomous rage flickered in my blood

“And if you even think about going near Lily or touching one strand on her head, I will hand you over to Aiden to do whatever he wants with you.”

My blood chilled because I would rather die by Ren’s hand than even go near Aiden.

And when Ren left, it finally hit me. I had been so confident after the mating bond that I did not realize that a day would come when Ren would want to be free of me. I had taken him for granted over and over again and now he was gone and I was back to square one.

I was no longer mated to a prince of Shadow cove.

I was back to being a mateless wolf. No. Even worse, a rejected omega.

I was back to the bottom that I had so desperately tried to rise above.

I was back to being the ragged daughter of a drug addict stripper.

And all I could think about as I stared at Lily’s form was how it didn’t matter what Ren told me.

I had already lost it all so dying was better than being an outcast.

If I was going to go down, then Lily was going down with me.

We would go to hell together, even if I have to kiss the devil’s feet to make sure of it.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 95

Lily’s pov:

Wake up, Lily.

An annoying, incessant voice.

Wake up, child.

WAKE UP!

I forced my eyes open and my head throbbed in protest at the way I had woken up.

Where was I?

And why did keeping my eyes open feel like a struggle?

I felt so lightheaded and tired as I took in the surroundings around me. I was lying on a plush queen sized bed with pink and silver sheets that were very unfamiliar. This was not a house that I had been in before, I noted and just as I made that realization, everything started to come back to me.

How I had found out that I was Aiden's mate and how he had vowed that he was not going to let me live peacefully on my own anymore... And Mauve.

"Get me her phone. Let's make sure no one's looking for her until it's too late."

That witch!

Yes, Mauve was the last person that I had seen before I passed out. Or was knocked out. Quickly rising from the bed, I looked down at myself and saw that someone had swapped out my uniform for clothes that were not mine, but the Louboutins that I had been wearing, which was Chelsea's gift to me, were still intact, sitting by the bed.

If Mauve had really wanted to have a conversation with me like a normal person without any ill intentions then I was sure that she would not have resorted to knocking me out and bringing me to this unfamiliar place and it would be foolish of me to still hang around here and hope that somehow she had changed and was just trying to get my attention.

I needed to leave here right now, but first I needed to find my phone.

I wondered if anyone had even figured out that I was missing and how long ago it was now since Mauve kidnapped me. There was no clock in sight but from the window, it was pitch black and I thought about how late it was in the evening. The party was going to be starting any minute now and I was sure that everyone would be anxious about where I was.

I was supposed to go shopping with the girls and arrive at the party after having my hair and makeup done but I had sent a text to Rhea right after I fled from Aiden that I was going to be getting a ride with Ren and before I could

find Ren, Mauve had intercepted me so now while Rhea thought I was with Ren, Ren thought I was with the girls which meant that it was going to be a while before any of them noticed what was wrong.

Searching everywhere and not finding my phone, I decided to give up and leave here before Mauve got back. I was not interested in sticking around to find out what she had planned for me.

I rushed towards the window, about to try and climb out when the door opened.

I froze.

“Oh, don’t let me stop you. You can try all you want but know that you stand a better chance in here with me than out there.” Mauve’s voice, still sounding as confident and sultry as the first time I heard it hit me and I slowly turned around to look at her.

Dressed in a black body suit that highlighted her curves, she was holding a red plastic cup I could tell contained alcohol and there was a sweet smile on her face that I was now starting to understand was completely fake. An act that she had perfected to lure her enemies.

“What do you want from me, Mauve?” I asked, knowing that it was already too late to escape.

“You surprise me, Lily. Today is your birthday, sweetheart and I threw you a party to celebrate. In Fact you are missing everything.”

And before I could refuse, she dug her claws into my arm and dragged me downstairs to the center of the living room that was packed with people that I did not recognize.

They all seemed familiar. Random faces of students I have seen at school. But there was not one single person that I recognized and it made my anxiety even far worse because it meant that something sinister was afoot. The music suddenly stopped and with fake cheer, Mauve stepped forward.

“Why do you look so glum, princess? Everyone has gathered here to wish you a happy f*****g birthday. The least you can do is act excited to see us.”

“Mauve,” my heart was pounding with fear and dread. “stop this!”

“Happy birthday, Lily.” She whispered and dumped the cup of beer that she had been holding over my head, causing the entire crowd to laugh at me.

I flinched, cold beer dribbling down my hair and back. I pushed her away and growled but she grabbed me by the shoulder in a side hug like we were best friends and kept talking, addressing the crowd.

“I wanted to do this for Lily and it made me so sad that she could not even afford a party or even decent clothes so I gave her some of mine. Now that she is officially an adult, how about she shows us what is so special about her, yes?”

The crowd answered with a cheer and to my horror, she ripped off the clothes on my body to pieces, stripping me in front of so many laughing schoolmates who were videoing the whole thing. I tried to hang on to the straps left on my body as she pulled it apart, hot tears streaming down my face.

“Please Mauve. Please don’t do this.”

“But I have to, dearest. So that everyone can see you for what you are. A worthless w***e who seduced my mate and made him cheat on me. As if that was not enough, she decided to steal him.”

My eyes widened in shock and I shook my head immediately, holding on to the tattered blouse that barely managed to cover my bra.

“That’s a lie, Mauve. You know that it is...”

Before I could finish, she slapped me hard, knocking me into a table. Pain exploded on my forehead as it hit the edge of the table and I tasted blood in my mouth from the force of her slap.

This literal bitch-

My eyes spun and I screamed as somebody picked me up by my hair to face him. It was Sebastian and he grinned, his hand pulling at my roots. I winced in, tears spilling down my cheeks as I struggled to get out of his grasp.

“Sorry, babe. This is going to hurt like a b***h,” he said, with a sickening grin on his lips and for a moment, I wondered why. Why he hates me so much, what I ever did to him, to them, to be treated in this manner, right before he punched me in the gut. Hard.

I cried out, my lungs collapsing, fighting for my breath as he flung me, knocking me into a nearby bar.

“What?!” I spat, “what did I ever do to you?! What did I ever do to any of you?”

Every single day since my dad died has been hell for me. I thought... I really thought that if I lived peacefully, if I minded my own business and squeeze myself into the tiniest hole as possible, let people walk all over me, never talk back, never fight back, they would leave me and let me be. I really thought that I could graduate from the academy peacefully without gathering attention to myself.

I thought wrong. Obviously.

“You? You exist, Lily, that’s what’s so wrong with you. We lost our loved ones to the m a s s a c r e and yet, the traitor’s beloved daughter gets to live her life to the fullest.” He grabbed my head and knocked me against the surface so hard, my vision blurred. Pain thundered in my head, splitting my skull. “Too bad Aiden is late to the party. He’d love to see this.”

I froze.

What? Aiden... he was in on this too? It shouldn’t shock me, shouldn’t surprise me... but why did it hurt so much?

“He’s on our side, you know? He said he’d be here to have a front row seat of your misery. He lost the most out of what happened. His entire family completely wiped out, save for an uncle. He’s acting weird these days. You must have casted a spell on him like that sorcerer father of yours. Maybe killing you will bring him back to his senses.”

My breath caught in my throat. It suddenly felt so evident. So clear.

They’re going to kill me.

“You know what to do, Seb!” Mauve hollered and I winced as he picked me up by my hair again, fighting to set myself free.

They’re going to kill me. They’re really going to kill me if I don’t get help in time. I need to get out of here. I need Ren... heck, even Zac, if he doesn’t already hate me after I rejected his confession in the music room.

Everyone just kept laughing and making videos as Sebastian practically beat me to a pulp and dragged my carcass outside the house, dropping me in front of a cage filled with menacing looking dogs.

They were almost as big as regular wolves and my heart beat faster in my chest as they snarled at me.

Shaggy black fur, bigger than the average wolf, razor sharp teeth, a crazed glint in their blood red eyes.

Blood hounds. Native dogs that thrived only in Night Shade pack. They were a luxury kept and reared by the royals in the pack. I was in Night Shade. Aiden's pack.

My heart broke even more.

Mauve walked to stand in front of me , Paige beside her and identical vicious smiles on their faces as Sebastian walked over to the cage.

“You better start running if you want to get a headstart.” Sebastian said with a smirk and I picked myself up immediately, not needing to be told twice and started sprinting for my life as I heard him open the cage and release those monsters on me.

They caught up to me in no time, snarling and snapping at my ankles, surrounding me on all sides as I ran for my life to get away from them.

I ran hard and long, my lungs almost giving out on me, ignoring a signboard that I probably should have stopped to read because by the time I ran into the pitch black forest, I didn't hear their snarls anymore.

But I kept running, going deeper into the forest until I realized that I could no longer hear anything at all. Not a single bird, a single insect. Only one forest could be this dead and silent and that was when I realized why there had been a sign board.

This was the forbidden woods where Ferals lived. And like a fool I had walked right into the thick of it.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 96

Aiden's POV

Hit.

Punch.

Kick.

Hit.

Punch.

Kick.

I kept punching and hitting the bag over and over again, each punch harder than the last as the memories of today hit me over and over again.

I could not get the shock on Lily's face out of my head when she realized that she was looking at me and that I was her mate. I watched the shock turn into disbelief, then realization... then rage.

I could see it in the spiteful glare that she gave me that she absolutely despised that I was her mate, that I was the last option she could have ever anticipated and even though I should have anticipated such a fierce response from her, I had no idea that it would hurt me this bad.

I wondered if this was how she felt when I had been mean and abusive towards her. This dark fire that consumed my chest. I swallowed hard, feeling nothing but disgust at myself when I remembered how I had practically blackmailed her to go down on me like a pervert and hated myself for enjoying it that much.

Then, I could have sworn that I did not care when I saw the tears in her eyes as she looked up at me with hate and hurt, but now the memory was eating me alive.

My soul was on fire. Nyx was throwing a raging tantrum in my head and it was taking more of an effort to shut him out.

I kept punching the bag until my knuckles started bleeding and even then I did not stop, because at least I could allow myself to feel this pain. I deserved to feel this pain.

I'd let her hit me, hurt me, ruin me... if she would just. Punch. Not. Punch. Reject me. Kick.

I didn't turn when I heard the door to the gym open but from their scents, I knew that it was Maya that had walked in. Maya was probably the only reason why I still tethered on the brink of insanity and had not just fallen off the cliff into madness. After my parents died, she took up the role of more than a housekeeper and became the mother figure that I didn't even know that I needed at the time.

She tried to love me as much as I allowed her. Which wasn't even much.

"You're bleeding, Aiden. Please stop." She said gently, in her soft, hoarse voice and even though I knew that if I did stop, the pain would stop, I didn't. I kept hitting the bag harder and harder until I knocked the bag off its hook.

My lungs were on fire as I tried to get my breathing in order. Sweat was dribbling down my chest and back.

Aiden! Find her! Nyx's bellow almost sent me to my knees.

I gritted my teeth and forced him back deeper into my subconscious. I was hot, restless and aching all over. What I needed was to leave her alone and not provoke her any longer.

Turning around, I finally looked down at my hands and saw how bloodied they were. My wounds would heal, but my heart? A heart that I didn't even know I still possessed felt like it was bleeding.

"Look at what you've done to yourself, my boy." Maya scolded. She made to reach for me but I shook my head and even though I saw her eyes soften in sympathy, I could not accept her kindness. I didn't deserve it.

"Let the cleaners know that they can come in. I'll be retiring to the bedroom now and I do not want to be disturbed."

"What about dinner?"

"I won't be having dinner tonight."

"Aiden-"

"Enough, Maya." I snapped, rage flashing in my voice and she kept quiet immediately, bowing her head.

“My prince,” she whispered, even though her voice wavered. “Tonight is the third night in a row you’re refusing dinner. I worry for you. Allow me to prepare something small. You don’t even have to come down to the dining room. Please.”

I swallowed, my chest suddenly feeling tight.

I scoffed and picked up my towel, throwing it over my shoulder and I noticed there was a small smile playing on her lips like she just won a battle.

“Would you also like something for your injury.”

“I’m fine,” I grunted and left before she could convince me to allow her to care for my wounds.

Because I just might let her.

Spending almost an hour in the shower did not dim the pain that I felt internally and even the sting from my already healing wounds did not soothe the rage in my heart. Worse, beneath that rage was soul crushing fear because I knew that look in her eyes. I could not stomach the fact that she was going to reject me because as much as I pretended that I still had the upper hand, I knew that I was going to lose her.

Just the thought of her going with someone else when she was supposed to be mine gutted me.

Stepping out of the bathroom after putting on my robe, my face softened when I saw a tray of food on the little dining table in my king sized bedroom.

Maya was an angel and I did not deserve the amount of consideration that she had given me since I was a child. If only she knew what I had done to Lily, maybe she would finally give up on me.

Walking away from the table after looking at the food, I put on my sweatpants and a t-shirt and picked up my phone to see that it had been buzzing with different notifications. I ignored them, not in the mood to speak to a single soul that was not Lily. Not that she would even consider texting me.

Trying to connect my phone to my Bluetooth speaker, I paused when my phone still kept buzzing unusually and when I opened it, I realized that the messages were coming from a particular group chat that I had been added to

a long time ago. I had never really paid attention to it and for that reason it had been dormant until tonight.

When I looked at the title of the group, shame tore through me. It had been created specifically to make Lily's life miserable. I felt like throwing up as I remembered how much I had been so invested in ruining her life and how I must look stupid now trying to convince her that I was ready to right my wrongs and protect her.

Quickly deciding to exit the group, I stopped when one of the videos caught my attention and when I hit play, a red mist clouded over my vision.

Stop! Don't do this!

That's a lie!

It was a video of Lily getting beat up by someone whose back was turned to the camera.

I'd recognize that fiery red hair anywhere.

Mauve.

"You know what to do, Seb!"

My mate... my mate was being chased by blood hounds in a direction I recognized all too well.

I was grabbing my car keys and racing down the stairs, my heart in my f*****g throat. I seethed through my teeth as her dreadful screams echoed through my phone, each one unfurling a ball of fury in me that turned my bones to ash.

f**k! The forbidden woods of all places... For an omega like her... that was as good as a death sentence.

If something happens to her... if something happens to her...

My hands were trembling as I put the car on reverse and raced out of my family's estate.

Immediately, I placed a call to Ren, knowing that he was most probably with Zac and as the phone rang, my hands tightened on the steering wheel as my wolf and I made an agreement.

Mauve. She's going to be the deade**st b i t c h** alive.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 97

Ren's POV

"Here, pretty boy. Put these on." Bia said, stepping on her tip toes to put a garland of dahlias around my neck.

The smile I gave her was fake, forced rehearsed, but I couldn't stop myself.

Not when my heart was restless, anxious, actively trying to beat out of my chest.

I was supposed to be all smiles and be happy for Lily on her big day. The yacht was a thirty minutes drive away from here and the crew was already on board. Lily wouldn't see it coming and we'd have the entire weekend to ourselves without her having to look over her shoulders. I should be excited.

I'm not.

As much as I tried to deny it, I knew that there was a reason why I was restless. What if Lily had found her mate? I knew that I had told her that I did not mind if she found her mate but I could not lie and say that it did not scare me that she would.

I had done something completely out of character and broken into Mauve's house like a serial killer and given her no choice but to accept the rejection. And even though there was a hollow feeling where I knew that the bond used to be, being with Lily made up for it. f**k, did she make up for all of it. These few days with Lily have been my happiest compared to all my years with Mauve.

Just the thought of seeing her again, smiling that innocent smile in surprise at what we had managed to put together for her tonight was enough to remind me that I had made the right choice... But all that could end the minute she finds her mate because what if he did want to keep her all to himself? What was I going to do about that?

My eyes locked with Zac's from where he was standing across the living room of Bia's house which was our location for the birthday party. We held each other's frigid gaze for a second, the frost between us, palpable.

He had made a move on her. At this point, nothing Aiden or Zac does should shock me anymore. Of course, I had seen it coming but it didn't stop me from feeling like I was swallowing hot coal down my throat.

I didn't even bother to further hurt myself by wondering if for even a split second, Lily had considered his offer of leaving me for him because I had seen the way the two of them were with each other and even though Lily tried to deny the truth, I knew her and I knew that something had changed about the way she sees Zac. She was attracted to him. She liked him. And she hated herself for it.

I couldn't even handle the possibility of her and Zac, what would happen if she actually finds her mate?

Jealousy was starting to rear its ugly head and I sighed and made for the kitchen to get a drink.

And ran into Zac drinking vodka straight from the bottle.

Frigid silence ensued throughout the room as I ignored him and went straight to the fridge to grab a bottle of water.

"Congratulations." His voice was clipped, biting cold, dripping with sarcasm.

I looked up from the fridge and into eyes as dark as oblivion and frowned. "What are you congratulating me for?"

He frowned and guzzled down his drink. "For Lily of course. You won, I lost. I think a congratulations is in order."

"It was never a competition for me. I love Lily."

It happened so fast. One moment Zac was at the other end of the room, lazy and languid, drinking his vodka, the next, he was grabbing my by my collar and he slammed me against the fridge. "And what the f u c k do you think I feel for her? You think this is a f u c k i n g game for me?"

"Isn't it? You only want her because she reminds you of the girl you loved. I love Lily because of who she is. Do you even know her?"

"I don't need to know her to know that every single cell in my body lights on fire when she's close to me. I don't need to know her to know that I feel like

ripping your head off for even suggesting that what I feel for her is f*****g child's play compared to what you feel for her. I don't need to- to know her to realize that it f*****g rips my heart out that I don't even stand a chance against you. That the goddess gave me another chance and I have to fight my best friend over it."

He was not even talking to me anymore. His eyes wide and livid, chest heaving.

"And now, she's not even picking my calls or- or replying my texts. I f*****d up. I f*****d up."

I've never seen him so scattered, so unsure of himself. He was always so confident, suave and smooth with his words and actions, it was almost humbling seeing him this way.

He let me go, grabbed his hair and looked up at the ceiling, groaning, "f**k, Azrael, shut the f**k up for one second!"

He cursed and left me to myself and I walked out to find him typing furiously on his phone.

He was taking this a lot worse than I expected. He didn't look like he noticed that Bia was even giving him the stink eye as he poured himself another drink and mixed it with cranberry juice before emptying the contents of the cup in large gulps.

"Hey," Bia hip bumped me, "cheer up. Vampire boy has got nothing on you."

I looked at her, "you know him? You know what he is?"

"We met. Started off on the wrong foot." She rubbed her neck, wincing at a memory. "Anyway, why do you look so forlorn? You need to relax, Ren, everything is going right according to plan, okay? She is going to love it." Bia said as she stood in front of me and I nodded, not ready to talk about what exactly was bothering me.

The restlessness in my heart was increasing by the second. At first, I had thought that it was because I was worried about Lily finding her mate. But now...

She's not even picking my calls... or replying my texts.

“I hope she does.” I answered half heartedly, taking out my phone and she waved me off with a snort.

“You’re too modest. She’s going to be blown away. Any girl will be if they’re going to get the same princess treatment you give her-” she suddenly paused mid sentence, her eyes narrowing in Zac’s direction as he hovered around the birthday cake. “Hold that thought, I will only be a moment,” she said, leaving my side immediately.

“Don’t touch that thing, vile creature.” She started in English and finished in Spanish and I could not help the smile that briefly made its way to my face as five feet something Bia cursed in Spanish, yapping at Zac who towered over her for putting a finger through the icing on the cake.

To make it even more comical, Zac acting looked scolded, his finger still in his mouth as he licked the icing and I knew Lily would like this image.

Where was she?

Was shopping really taking that long? I didn’t want her to rush over here if she didn’t find what she liked but...

“That is probably the millionth time you have checked your phone, wolf.” Angelo drawled beside me, catching me by surprise. An uneasy feat, but my mind was splintering to pieces right now. “You need to relax like Bia said. you look like a groom left at the altar.”

I rolled my eyes, unable to voice out my concern because I was too busy trying to call her line.

It went straight to voicemail and I decided to call my sister, suddenly feeling agitated.

What if something had happened to them on the way?

One of them would surely have called me right?

Or were they badly injured?

Just as I was about to call Rhea, the door bursted opened and Rhea walked in, holding so many bags in both hands, Chelsea trailing behind her and also carrying a ton of stuff.

“Chase will be here any hour now.” Chelsea said out as she scanned the room.

My heart dropped. Aira suddenly sprung awake.

Lily was not with the girls, so where was she?

“Where is Lily?” I asked Rhea.

“What do you mean where is Lily?” Rhea answered and before I could even get to her, Zac grabbed her by the shoulders and shook her roughly.

“What are you talking about, Ri?” Zac growled but I reached there in time and pulled him away from her, seeing her face moved from confused to annoyed as Zac and I waited for answers.

“I don’t know. You tell me. Why are you asking me where Lily is? She said she was going home with you.”

Zac looked at me with eyebrows raised and I shook my head, raking an agitated hand through my hair. “That’s not what she told me.”

Rolling her eyes, Rhea brought out her phone and showed us the message and my blood went cold as all of us stared at each other.

My heart was pounding wildly, erratically in my ears.

“What are you waiting for?” Zac’s voice jeered me back to reality. “We need to start looking for her. Let’s start at school. It’s the last place we saw her.”

“I installed a tracking device on her phone. I’ll get Chase to figure out her exact location.” I was already taking out my keys, ignoring everyone’s shocked looks, when my phone rang.

It was Aiden.

“Aiden, now is not a good time t-“

“Mauve. F u c k i n g Mauve, I’m going to ruin her-“

“Aiden, seriously.”

“She took her. She took Lily!”

My heart stopped.

Aiden was a hysterical mess, “they took her, they took her and it’s my fault. I shouldn’t have let her out of my sight. She’s going to die there. If we don’t get to her in time- I’m going to f*****g murder them all.”

I couldn’t make sense out of what he was saying except he had mentioned Lily’s name and I had to be living in an alternate reality where Aiden, who was not scared of looking death in the face, was terrified of losing Lily.

“Calm down and speak slowly, Aiden. You are on speaker now.”

“f**k that!” Zac grabbed the phone, screaming into it as he began walking towards the door. “They took her where?! Tell me where she is, goddamnit!” His hands were trembling, his voice was hoarse.

“The forbidden woods! They took her to the forbidden woods!”

Rhea screamed, her face pale in horror.

“Mauve. She’s responsible for all of this.”

Something cold and dark burned in my chest where there used to be care and affection for my former mate.

“Meet me at the edge of the woods. I’ll be going in to get her. And know this, brother, when I get my hands on that pathetic excuse of a mate of yours, I will make her worst nightmares look like f*****g child’s play.”

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 98

Aiden’s POV

The first thought that came to my mind as I dropped the call with Ren and kept speeding into the woods was how foolish I had been these past few months.

Fate had a twisted way of teaching lessons because why did my mate turn out to be the daughter of my parents’ murderer.

Every night before I slept, I tried to remind myself that I was too young back then, that there was no way I could have saved them. That there was no way I could have prevented their deaths. I was just a child.

Now, I wished that I had reminded myself when I first saw Lily Beauregard that she was just a child back then. That blaming her for what her father had done was the most foolish thing I could have ever done in my entire life.

And now, just when I had found out that Lily was my mate and wanted to spend the rest of my life atoning for what I had done to her, I was about to lose her.

Mauve...

I ground my teeth in rage.

Mauve was going to pay for this. They were all going to pay for trying to take her away from me.

Slamming the door hard as I jumped down from my car, I didn't let the negative thoughts in my head overwhelm me. I was going to find her alive. There was no other option.

The forbidden forest was designed in a way that it kept the ferals inside, bordered by enough spells that once a feral wolf was banished into these thick woods, they would never be able to come out of it but there was nothing that barred the humans from going in and out, because unless one wanted to die a gruesome painful death, they never ventured into these parts.

Hunting ferals was a sport I carried out behind my uncle's back. I couldn't take my revenge on Edgar, so his minions will have to pay for his crimes.

Little did I know that my little pastime would help me in this manner.

I inhaled slowly, letting the darkness cradle my bones as I felt my powers awaken in me. The shadows crawled out of me, melting into terrifying beast forms.

They were more than I'd ever see them appear at a time, the darkness of the forest, giving them life. I've never seen them so feral, so restless and hard to control.

Find her, I commanded them. Find her for me!

They didn't need to be told twice.

Cerberus, Azazel, Rahab, Erebus, Orion and the rest of my creatures, they took to their heels, faster than I've ever seen them go and as soon as they caught her scent, pinpointing her exact location, my response was almost instantaneous.

Bones breaking almost immediately like it had a hundred times before, each transformation less painful than the last, I changed from man into beast.

Transforming into my Lycan form was almost as easy as breathing and I took off immediately, ploughing down trees and branches in my pursuit for my mate, following the path the creatures had taken and at the sound of her cry of pain, my heart twisted in fear and agony.

No.

Stop them! I commanded them. Protect her!

The farther my beasts ran from me, the less I had a hold of them, the more they showed me that they could act without my commands.

It's good we were on the same page.

The last thing I needed to be in a den filled with vile creatures like the feral wolves who had lost all sense of rational judgment and were just pure beast was to be unfocused.

She was surrounded by what looked like the entire pack of ferals that existed in the forest and more of my creatures melted out of me to join the fight.

Not enough, I realized as I tore through the throng of beasts, my claws cutting through fur and muscle and connective tissue. I've never felt such fear at the realization. My creatures were not enough.

Covered in bruises, Lily had her back to a very large tree, her face and body covered in bruises and there was a nasty bite mark on her ankle where she was bleeding profusely.

She looked like she was going to pass out at any moment but she somehow still kept standing, waving the stick in front of her to defend herself from the ferals and if we were not in such dire circumstances, I might have beamed with pride.

She had been through so much in her life and somehow, she had not given up.

“Stand back!” She screamed at the creatures, swinging her stick in a threatening way even though her hands shook with fear and sweat pooled on her forehead.

I was too late. One of the ferals lunged at her and bit into her arm that held the stick, holding on to her as he shook her like a Rag doll.

Rage snapped something in me.

With a roar that shook the entire forest, I allowed Nyx to take control for the first time in a long time, to get the revenge that we were both in agreement was his to take and I felt him grab me and push me into the recesses of my consciousness as he took control of me, spreading to his full height and reveling in his true potential before he sprung into action, mauling the wolves to bite sized chumps, relishing the taste of their blood and gut and their screams of pain as he tore them to pieces.

By the time he was done, not one feral wolf was left standing and there was blood everywhere, none of them mine.

In a burst of energy, I returned back to my human form, my growls and snarls, giving way to breathless pants.

I was naked from my waist up, clad only in a pair of sweatpants I had been wearing before my transformation and Lily’s eyes widened in surprise when she realized that it was me.

She’d be grateful. Relieved. I’m here, not Ren, not Zac. Me. Surely that should count in my favour-

“No! No no no!”

My stomach dropped.

The relief that I hoped to see in her eyes at my presence was absent and I had to remind myself that I had brought that upon myself. That I was responsible for how she was reacting.

Her legs gave out and she fell to the ground but she still managed to hold her stick up in a defensive position, tears streaming down her innocent soft face.

“Stay back. Don’t come any closer. I can’t believe you followed me here!” She screamed, crawling back on her arms as if she would somehow be able to flee from me and I hid the hurt that appeared at her rejection, squatting in front of her, my gaze softening in a way that I hoped communicated the fact that I was not here to hurt her.

There was revulsion on her face. As if she was going to be sick.

“I wish I could, but now is not the time for that. We need to get you out of here.” I whispered gently and cradled her to my chest, taking a deep inhale of her hair as I lifted her up and started my walk out of the woods.

She felt so light in my arms. So fragile and breakable and yet I knew she had the will of an ox. Perhaps that was what I had pretended that I hated about her when it was what made her the most intriguing to me.

Getting to where I parked my car, I kept her gently on the floor, realising that she was already having a fever as she started to mumble incoherent words and I quickly took account of all of her injuries.

She had a gash on her forehead, her body was covered in bruises that I realized could not have been from the ferals and my heart hardened knowing that a human had inflicted this on her before chasing her into these dangerous forest but what worried me the most was the big bite mark that had been left on her right forearm by a feral wolf.

One of the reasons why feral wolves were thrown into this forest was because their bite was fatal. No one had ever survived a bite from a feral wolf before and I held her even tighter, shaking my head as I tried to stop myself from spiraling into panic.

Focus, Aiden. Think.

Ren should be here by now. Where the f u c k is he?!

Hospital. I need to get her to the hospital.

I licked the wound on her forehead and was about to rise to my feet and place her in the back seat of my car when bright lights nearly blinded me, the sound of a car approaching.

Ren was the first to jump out, his eyes filled with terror as he ran towards us as he kept screaming her name.

“Lily! Lily!”

Lily sparked to life in my arms.

“Ren.” She whispered with relief, right before passing out and even though I held her tight to my chest, even though I was the one that saved her, I feared that this changed nothing.

I feared that no matter what I did, my mate would never forgive me and accept me into her life.

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 99

Ren’s POV

How Zac was able to drive us to the edge of the forest in a calm state without losing his cool would forever be a mystery to me because the entire ride, my eyes were brimming with tears and my hands shook violently.

This was all my fault.

Mauve had done this to Lily because of me. I should have seen this coming. Should have known that despite my warning, Mauve would try to have her revenge. She had never been one to just sit down and accept whatever situation she found herself in and I had greatly underestimated her.

Lily, please be safe, I whispered as Zac took a left turn and my entire body went cold with horror when I saw Aiden kneeling with Lily in his arms, her entire body unmoving.

Jumping out of the car, I ran towards him and when he raised his head, his eyes were red and swollen and I shook my head.

“Is she dead?”

“Not yet.” He whispered quietly.

“Then what are we waiting for. Let’s f*****g go.” Zac yelled from the driver’s seat, honking wildly and when I tried to help Aiden carry Lily, he shook his head.

“I got her.”

The car started and under normal circumstances, I might have told Zac to try and not kill with the way he was driving like a mad man but we were running out of time.

I was sitting in the back seat with Aiden, Lily’s legs draped over my thighs while Aiden held her body to his chest.

“Please, Ren. Please do something. Please.”

I nodded, my hands trembling as I reached for her hand where the bite gash had already turned black and closed my eyes again for the tenth time since I started trying.

My palms glowed, my power rushed out of me, but it changed nothing.

Nothing at all. My powers did not even seem to be doing anything at all and I opened my eyes to see that the skin corrosion was starting to spread everywhere.

Lily’s heartbeat grew fainter by the minute and I could not help the tear that slipped down my face as I shook my head at Aiden.

“It’s not working?” Zac whispered from the front and I nodded even though he could not see me.

“No.”

I had not seen Aiden cry since the day they came to tell us that his parents had been murdered. Even on the day of their burial, when we had cried for him, he had just stood there like a gargoyle, eyes dry and countenance completely removed.

But now as he cupped Lily’s face, tears kept streaming down his cheeks like a river, his entire body shaking with sobs as he kissed the back of her hand.

“I’m so sorry, sweetheart. I’m so sorry that this happened. Please don’t leave me. Please allow me to make things right. Allow me to beg for your forgiveness. I’ll do anything you want. Please just open your eyes, Lily. Please”

I could only watch in silence as my greatest fear became reality and I did not need anyone to confirm that Aiden was Lily’s mate. From the moment he made that phone call to tell us where she was, I had suspected it but seeing them together, seeing nothing but sorrow and guilt in his eyes as well as unflinching loyalty and love, there was no doubt that Lily had found her second half.

But what use was the mating bond now? What use was any of this if we lost the woman we loved? Because finding out who her mate was changed nothing for me. I was still recklessly irrevocably in love with Lily Beauregard and felt so helpless that my powers were doing absolutely nothing.

But with the way the skin corrosion as a result of the bite was spreading, I was afraid that by the time we got to the hospital, it would be too late.

By the time we got to the hospital, owned by my parents, the rest of the gang was there along with Lily’s mother and as Aiden dropped her on the stretcher and the medics wheeled her away, Lily’s mother took one look at her child’s decaying body and fell to her knees, her sobs nerve wracking.

Rhea was crying quietly and Chelsea held her while Bia was holding Lily’s mother up, tears streaming down her face too.

Aiden and Zac looked like it was the end of the world and by the time my mother came out of the room, wearing a labcoat, I didn’t wait for her to speak before I searched her thoughts, freezing as she delivered the heart wrenching news to the rest.

“I’m so sorry. We’ve tried everything supernaturally possible but her body is rejecting our powers. The Hawthorne abilities have proven ineffective against feral bites and I fear that there may be nothing else that we can do.”

“No. I will not accept that. I refuse to accept it! Do whatever it takes to save her, Ariel. I cannot lose my mate.” Aiden yelled and I saw everyone else look surprised at the news, confirming what I had suspected the entire car ride.

I watched as my mother's chin trembled with compassion but she kept her tone calm and professional.

"Yelling at me will not change the fact that our powers have not worked and will not work for her. The skin corrosion is already too much. I'm afraid that we may have to say our goodbyes at this point."

"How about we say goodbye to your establishment for not being able to save my mate?!"

My mother's eyes glowed with rage but she swallowed it up, understanding Aiden's pain.

"No. We can try something else. I can give her my blood." Zac, who had not spoken the entire time said and everyone looked at him.

It was something that no one had ever tried because werewolves and vampires were never in good relations but there was a myth that vampire blood could reverse and heal injuries and diseases. In the right doses it could accelerate the healing process, promote tissue regeneration and mend wounds that were considered humanly irreparable. It might even reverse the effects of mortal injuries and fatal conditions that should result in immediate death. It just might save Lily.

But like everything supernatural, there was a catch. If a human consumed too much vampire blood, it could lead to an adverse side effect known as "Vampirism," causing them to transition into a vampire themselves. The chances that Lily would survive the transition and become like Zac who was a wolf before he was bitten and became something other was very slim. The transition might very well kill her in fact.

"Let's do it." Aiden said immediately and when Zac nodded, they both looked at my mother. I already knew from the way she stared that like me, she also did not think it would work and that it might hasten Lily's death rather than stop it.

"I cannot risk the integrity of this establishment by trying something as reckless as that. We do not even know if she will survive it or turn into something that will have dire consequences. We defy the normal laws if we try this."

“f**k all of the laws, Ariel. Please save her. I’ll do anything.” Aiden begged.
“Anything!”

Lily’s mother held on to my mother, dropping to her knees as she cried hard, her shoulders and back trembling. “Please save her. Save my Lily. Do what it takes as long as I get to hold my daughter in my arms again.”

But would it work? Or would it backfire on us?

Bullied Mate Of The Lycan Kings – Chapter 100

Ren’s POV

The waiting room was very quiet and I could only watch as everyone waited for my mother to do the blood test that would confirm if Zac’s blood was compatible enough to be transfused into Lily.

I watched as Aiden sat as still as a stone statue and I realized that while I had thought he was not feeling anything on the day of his parents burial because of his blank face, that dead expression had been because he felt too much.

Sensory overload. There was nothing left to do except sit quietly and accept their deaths. Now, there was nothing left to do except sit quietly and pray to the heavens that by some miracle, Lily is saved.

Bia had stopped crying but Lily’s mother hadn’t and even though her sobs had become quieter, she still rocked back and forth on her seat, with Bia’s arms wrapped around her as we waited for Zac to return.

Rhea had also stopped crying but she looked as pale as a ghost, holding Chelsea’s hands really tight. Chase stood on her other side, watching over his sister and the girl he loves.

When my mother came out with Zac and he nodded with his best attempt at a smile, I could see the relief on everyone’s faces but that was only the first phase of this solution. The next was going to be the transfusion of the blood taken from Zac to Lily and that was the most crucial part because the chance of her surviving was equal to the chance that we would lose her.

“Ren, a word,” Ariel called and I nodded, walking with her to her office.

“I know that we have all agreed to do this procedure but of all of the people there, you and I are the only ones that have even the tiniest bit of doubt that this would work, am I right?”

I didn't realize that my mother had been watching me for the amount of time that I had spent staring at her and I nodded.

“Are you okay with all of this?” She whispered and I shrugged.

In just a couple of hours, I had gone from being the only boy in Lily's life to Zac confessing his feelings for her and finding out that Aiden was her mate but none of this could compare to knowing that it was because of my jealous bitter ex that Lily was now in this situation.

I knew that no one blamed me for it but the guilt was eating me alive. For the very first time, I had decided to be selfish and this was what had happened.

I didn't get to say no now just because I was worried that this was dangerous when it might just be the only way to save her life.

“I just want her back, mother. Whatever it takes.”

Nodding, my mother led me back out of her office and as we walked towards the room where Lily lay unconscious, she continued

“I ask you this because to the best of my knowledge, you are the one she recognizes as her partner and there are resulting consequences of a blood exchange between a vampire and another, human or supernatural. It is called the blood bond. Do you remember this?”

As a descendant from a long line of healers, even without my special abilities, it had been the Hawthorne tradition to know about any and everything related to life and death. I nodded, my blood running cold as I thought about what this blood bond might mean going forward.

The blood bond was a powerful and intimate connection formed when there was a blood exchange between vampires. On rare occasions, vampires had also bonded with humans they came to love.

The human either drinks the vampire's blood, or receives a blood donation and what completed the ritual was the vampire feeding on the recipient so that the two could share a bond almost similar to a mating bond for werewolves.

All of us that were close to Zac knew all about this because Calista had tried to do it to him in order to use love to make her his puppet.

Vampires in a blood bond don't merely fall in love and hope to procreate, they see their partners as their sole reason for existence, the center of their universe. They become nurturing, protective and devoted to their partner.

"We are going to give her Zac's blood now but rest assured that as long as he has not fed on her or does not feed on her subsequently, the blood bond will not take effect."

Of course Zac has fed on Lily before, making the possibility of a blood bond happening very high. And even if he hadn't, I knew for a fact that my best friend would drink her blood just to bond with her.

"However," my mother continued, "the blood recipient who happens to be Lily in this case may experience heightened emotions and unrequited love and affection for her donor thanks to the donation. I know how you feel about Lily which is why I wanted to warn you of the risks. Being only part vampire, Zac's blood may not be potent enough to get this reaction out of her, but it's important to understand the risks involved. And then there is the chance that his blood may not even work against the corrosion process and we might lose her."

Fighting the urge to howl in sorrow, I nodded solemnly, knowing that whether Lily woke up in love with Zac did not matter. None of that mattered right now. The only thing that mattered to me was that she lived and I prayed to the gods if they were still listening to spare her. Whatever happened when she woke up, I would bear it. If she did not want to be with me anymore, I would bear it even if it would feel like my entire world was going to turn on its head and my heart was going to be shredded into pieces.

The two hours that passed after that conversation were the most horrendous as we waited to know if the blood donation had somehow worked and when my mother came out with tears of relief in her eyes to announce that even though she was unconscious, the blood donation had worked and the corrosion was receding, it felt like a weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

Lily's mother was the first that was allowed to see her and Bia went in with her. When they were finished, Rhea and Chelsea went in to see her and then it was down to the three of us. Zac, Aiden and I.

"I'll go first." Zac announced and when Aiden didn't argue, I wondered what was on his mind.

The hallway was empty save for the two of us since the others had gone to the reception and Aiden finally spoke, his voice hoarse from lack of use. He hadn't said a word since the beginning of the whole blood donation exercise.

"Mauve did this."

"I know."

"I know that you are no longer mated to her but do not interfere with whatever I plan to do to her."

"I will not."

"Thank you," he whispered. "Thank you for being there for Lily when I could not."

I wanted to remind him that the reason why I even had to be there for Lily in the first place was because he had made her life a living hell but he already looked like he knew that and was beating himself up about it so I remained quiet.

"You're clearly the better man for her, Ren. Perhaps the best of the three of us. But she's my mate. I will not give her up and I will not leave her side."

I nodded, already expecting his answer. Aiden was not the kind to ever give up on what he wanted.

"I would not expect anything less."

His lips finally lifted in what was a shadow of a smile as we stared at each other and I smiled back.

Lily was safe and right now, that was all that mattered. We would take care of the rest when she woke up.