

Chapter 20

Dimitri

I was breathing hard, my vision clouded by hate and rage. Ajax push forward forcefully, and I wasn't even trying to hold him back. How dare this scum touch what is mine? When I looked at James, all I saw was my next victim, a disgusting piece of filth that I was going to gut like a fish. Yet I couldn't make myself move from Lily, still on the floor. Part of me wanted to rush James and tear his head off, and an equally large part of me had to stay and protect her. It was a confusing mental battle.

"A-Alpha... I-"

"SHUT UP!" I roared.

"Warriors to the gym NOW!" I sent out a mind link.

"Yes Alpha", "On our way Alpha".

James and I stared at each other, one with fear the other with murderous intent. The doors opened and closed and I caught Ben's scent. Finally, knowing someone I trusted was with me, I moved away from Lily and stalked towards James. Stupidly, he tried to run for the door, but I caught him, slamming him against the wall by the throat.

"You must have a fucking death wish." I hissed.

"What the fuck happened?" Ben asked behind me.

It was at that moment that Lily started crying. It started off as little hiccups but soon turned into broken, raw sobs. Glancing back at her, I saw Ben with a worried expression awkwardly patting her arm. I growled again and he immediately took his hands away from her.

Thara burst through the doors, followed by four warriors. She rushed to Lily while my warriors surrounded me. Slamming James head against the wall for good measure, I gave him up to my men.

"Take him to the dungeon. Put him in the smallest, dirtiest cell you can find and give him two shots of wolfsbane to keep him quiet." I ordered.

"Right away Sir." Two men hoisted James up and flanked by the other two, dragged him out of the room. I turned my attention back to my sister and my mate. Thara was rubbing Lilys back and talking quietly to her while she cried. Ben sat back on his heels and let Thara do her thing.

"He's gone Lily. It's okay now, shh. He's gone." Thara murmured.

"I... I couldn't... do it Thara... I couldn't..." Lily sobbed.

"It's okay sweetie. It's okay."

Thara met my eyes, motioning me forward. Kneeling beside Lily, I took over rubbing her back. Light sparks came through her clothes and into my palm and she started to breathe a little easier.

"We'll give you some space." Thara said. Taking Bens arm, she pulled him up.

"Right outside boss." Ben said. I nodded in response.

When the door closed, I scooped my arms under Lily and brought her into my lap. She rested her head against my chest, continuing to cry while I rubbed her back slowly.

"I-I'm sorry... Dimitri... I'm...sorry..." She hiccupped.

"Don't. Don't do that." I said softly. The tone of my voice surprised me. I was never this gentle with anyone. "What happened Lily?"

She scrunched her fists into my shirt. "He... was angry. Because you...demoted him. He said it. my fault. He tried to... he was going to..."

Her words cut off on another sob and it took all my willpower to stay where I was with her and not to go and kill that fucker.

"It's okay. I know. You don't have to say anymore." I told her.

"I tried to shift. I... wanted to. But I... couldn't. It would have killed him. I couldn't do it." She cried.

"It's okay Lily. He's gone." I repeated Thara's words.

In that moment, the situation became vivid. Lily had almost been raped. She was scared, hurting. My hands started to shake as I realized exactly how close she had come to being a victim of the most brutal crime. And I couldn't even deny my fault in it. I hadn't known where she was, if she was with friends or not. I hadn't cared to ask. What would have happened if I hadn't listened to Ajax? If I hadn't gotten to her on time?

"Ow."

I realized I'd unconsciously been squeezing Lily tighter to me. Too tight. Hastily, I let go.

"Sorry."

We sat in silence for a little bit. I didn't know what to say to her, and honestly, the guilt I was feeling was making it hard to talk. She looked calmer now. She was still crying although silently, the tears following their predecessors' paths. The look in her eyes though; I never wanted to see it there again.

"Dimitri."

I turned to see Thara poking her head in the door. She gave me a questioning look and I nodded; Ben came in with her, blanket in hand. He gave it to Thara who proceeded to wrap it around Lily.

"Come on. I'm going to run you a bath and get you some food." She helped Lily to her feet, wrapping her arm around her while leading her to her the

door. Lily looked back to me, mumbling, "Thank you." And then they were gone.

Exactly one heartbeat later, Ben fist connected with my cheek, sending me flying backwards.

"What the fuck?!"

"What the fuck exactly! What the fuck is the matter with you!" Ben screamed.

"What is wrong with you?"

"You didn't know where she was Dimitri! You had no idea! Do you know what would have happened if Ajax hadn't warned you?! Do you even fucking care?"

I stood up angrily. "Of course I do!"

"Do you?! You sure as fuck don't act like it! Why did you even bring her here huh? You're the shittiest excuse for a mate I've ever-"

His head snapped back as I landed a punch. He quickly recovered and tackled me. We rolled around throwing punches and jabs until he pushed me off, wiping blood from his lip.

"Fuck you." I snarled.

"No, fuck you Dimitri. I don't know what idea you cooked up when you met your her, but this isn't how we treat mates. Get your shit together!" He snapped. My eyes widened at his words. Did everyone see through me so easily?

Hitting my shoulder roughly as he passed, I watched him walk out the door. Anger and guilt and regret ran through me as I ran my hands through my hair.

"Fuck!" I yelled.

I had no clue what to do now, and I really didn't want to stop and think about what my Beta said to me. Not yet. Instead, I stripped in the middle of the room and shifted. I needed to run. I needed to get out and decompress for a while. Using my head to push the doors open I jogged down the hall and a startled Omega opened the front door for me. I nodded a thanks as I passed and sprinted towards the woods, disappearing into the trees. I jumped over logs and under branches, feeling the wind rush through my fur and just turned my mind off. I focused on the feeling of the dirt under my paws, the sounds of squirrels and birds and deer in the bush around me. A rabbit jumped into my path, quickly freezing in fear as I passed and then rushing away again. I didn't stop for hours; I couldn't stop. If I did, I'd start to think again and I didn't want to.

"So, we're just running from our problems now?" Ajax asked. I ignored him. "That's so Alpha like."

"Shut up. Shut up, shut up, shut up!"

"Why? Because you don't want to think about Lily? You don't want to acknowledge that Ben was right and you're a shitty mate?"

I whimpered.

"Face it Dimitri. You're becoming exactly like him."

"I'm not. I... I'm not."

"You are. But you don't have to. You can change Dimitri. We don't have to end up like him."

Coming to a stop, I sank to the ground. Memories played in my head, my heart clenching more and more. Then memories of tonight's events joined in. James lying atop my mate. Lily crying. The look in her eyes- broken and lost and haunted. A look I'd been partially responsible for. But I couldn't let her in. Couldn't love her.

Could I?