

Chapter 37

Dimitri

When I woke up, a familiar sadness washed over me. July twenty first, the day my parents died. I closed my eyes, anger and resentment and hatred at the world running through me, one after the other. Until a soft snore broke me out of my thoughts. I looked beside me, to my mates sleeping face. Her lips were parted, her hair was messy but she looked completely peaceful. A soft smile appeared on my face as I gazed at her. She was truly adorable.

And just like that, all the horrible things I was feeling moments ago were replaced by calm, joy and happiness. It was the first time ever I'd woken up on this day and didn't feel like shit. All because of the girl sleeping next to me. I spent five minutes more just admiring her before quietly getting out bed and heading to the shower. Thara had gone to our parent's graves yesterday so she could take Lily today. We usually went together, but she'd insisted so I didn't argue.

When I returned to the room, Lily was sitting up in bed, rubbing her eyes.

"What time is it?" She yawned.

"A little after seven."

"Ugh." She flopped down again.

"I set an alarm so you can get up to meet Thara." I told her. She gave me a lazy thumbs up in response and I chuckled.

"I have to go. I'll see you tonight."

"Where are you going?"

I paused. She didn't know? I would have thought by now my sister would have told her? I decided to be honest with her.

"I'm going to see my parent's graves."

Lily rolled over, peering up at me. So, she really didn't know.

"Your parents?"

I nodded. She cocked her head into the pillow, a question on her face.

"Okay. See you later."

"Later." I touched her head softly before leaving.

The feeling in the house had an air of sadness to it. Everyone here knew what today was, and they all mourned in their own ways. Heading out to my car, I pulled out my phone. Ben had texted me last night, updating me on his location. Nothing new yet, so I threw it onto the passenger's seat as I got in. I started the all-too familiar drive, taking my time. The cemetery was located to the south of the pack, just inside the border.

It was unusual doing this without my sister. I stopped to pick up flowers, my mom's favorites. Coincidentally, they happened to be Lillies. I smiled, another first for today. When I got to the cemetery, I took my time wandering through the headstones, paying my respects to warriors I'd known who were buried here. Finally, I reached them. Their headstones were larger than most here, intricately carved and beautifully designed. Sitting on the ground between them, I placed half the flowers on my mom's grave and the other half on dad's. Tharra's flowers were still settled there from yesterday.

"Hi Mom. Dad." I looked at their stones in turn. A light breeze blew through, whisking through my hair. "Another year huh? And I still miss you guys like crazy. And it's been a crazy year." Picking up a twig from the ground, I twirled it around in my hands.

"I don't know if you know this, where you are, but I met someone. My mate." I smiled softly. "Her name is Lily. Mom, you would love her. She's amazing. She's cute, and funny and kind and sweet. Nothing like me." I laughed. "Ajax says she reminds him of you. How you were. I can see it, I guess. I think she's going to be a great Luna for the pack. And get this dad, -" I looked at his stone now. "Lily is a Mother Wolf! I guess all those bedtime stories weren't just stories."

Peeling the bark off the tiny stick, I continued. "I wish you guys were here to meet her. Maybe if you were here, I wouldn't have been such an asshole to her in the beginning. If you saw that, I know you're disappointed in me. You always wanted me to meet my mate." My lower lip trembled slightly. "But I'm going to fix it, if she'll let me. I want her, I want to be the kind of mate she needs. Like you were for each other. I want to make you proud of me again."

My words choked off, a stray tear escaping my eye. I didn't bother to wipe it away.

"I've made a lot of mistakes, and I know if you were here, Mom would have hit me over the head with a frying pan by now. But Dad always told me a real man owns up to his mistakes, and does his best to fix them. So that's what I'm going to do."

I sat for a while longer, telling my parents about Luke finding his mate, and giving them shit if they knew about him when I didn't. I also told them about James disappearing and our crazy idea to find a witch to help us.

"Whoever this Gideon guy is, you can rest assured he'll never hurt Lily. Not under my watch. Do me a favor, and help me watch out for her, please? She seems to have a knack for getting into trouble. I guess we have that in common at least." I stood up, placing my hands on their stones, my eyes wet.

"Next time, I'll bring Lily to meet you. I love you guys."

Shoving my hands in my pockets, I turned and walked away. It was never easy, saying goodbye to them. That's why I only did this once a year. But I was thinking of making an exception this year, for Lily. I got back to my car, wiping my face. Looking over the graves one more time, I turned the key and started the drive home.

"Hey man."

Luke greeted me as I entered the packhouse.

"Hey."

"How was it?"

"Honestly? Not as bad this time. Not as hard."

He gave me a smile which I returned.

"I don't know if now is the right time, but I have that information you wanted. It's in your office."

Luke was still gathering the information on Lilys former pack while Ben was away. It was too important to put on hold again.

"How much did you find out?"

"A lot. You might want to leave it until tomorrow."

Thinking it over, I said, "Yeah, you might be right about that."

"I have some stuff to do, so I'll see you tonight."

"Sounds good. Don't be late."

"Never."

Luke was also standing in for Ben tonight, acting as Beta and Gamma. I'd already gotten Bens's verbal and written confirmation on accepting Lily as his Luna, but traditionally, both would be here to announce it to the

pack. Oh, well. It would be fine. Taking the stairs to my-our-room, I grabbed my clothes for tonight and hung them over my arm. I was giving up my bathroom to my sister for the afternoon so she could 'work her magic' on my mate, as she said. That left me to get ready in Bens room.

I had hours still before the ceremony, so I dropped the clothes and headed to the kitchen, hoping Greta had something to eat. The place was busy; Omegas and cooks bustling around preparing for the dinner after the ceremony. The air smelled of various meats, rice, veggies, potatoes and something garlicky. I spotted Greta amongst the staff and waved.

"Hello dear." She gave me her signature cheeky smile.

"Hi Greta. Think I could grab a sandwich or something?"

"There's a plate for you in the fridge over there." She pointed. "I figured you wouldn't wait until dinner."

"You're the best."

"I know how to take of my boys."

Giving her a quick side hug, I moved through the kitchen to retrieve my plate. Greta was spot on- A turkey and bacon club with potato salad on the side. She knew me well. I grabbed the plate, waving goodbye and left them to their preparations. I ate as I climbed the stairs, going to Bens room. My phone was buzzing on the table when I arrived.

Swallowing quickly, I picked it up. "Hello?"

"It's me." Bens's voice sounded distant.

"I can barely hear you."

"Reception out here is shit. This was the best I could do."

"Okay. What's up?"

"You won't fucking believe this, but I found what we're looking for."

I lowered my sandwich. "Already?"

"Pretty good, right?"

"Pretty suspicious."

A loud crash sounded on his end, followed by what sounded like a child laughing.

"Hey! Don't play with that!" Ben shouted. I couldn't make out the reply, but Ben groaned. "I should be home soon. I might actually be there for tonight, if we can catch a last-minute flight."

"Alright. I'll alert patrol that you're bringing guests. See you."

"Bye boss."

I hung up, tapping the phone against my thigh. Ben's task should have been next to impossible, especially given the circumstances. What witch would go against another? And to help werewolves at that? I had my doubts, and my suspicions, but I would put them to rest until I met whoever he was bringing back. Worst case scenario, I'd send them on their way and we'd start over.

Finishing my lunch, I jumped in the shower again, wanting to be totally refreshed. I had plans for tonight, and not all of them involved just making Lily our Luna. But I'd meant what I'd said to my parents; I was going to try and fix things between Lily and I, starting tonight. I was nervous as hell, and could only hope she would hear me out. While I was brushing my teeth, I mind linked Silvia, Connors former mate, and told her what I had in mind. She gushed at my idea, and promised to have everything ready before time. I'd made a good call with her. She was a nice girl.

Glancing at the time, I started to get ready. I fixed my hair, slicking it back and shaved my ever annoying five-o'clock shadow. My suit was a grey three piece, something Thara had picked out for me. She said it reminded her of the suit Dad wore at our mother's ceremony. It made me wonder what she had in store for Lily.

Luke popped his head in as I was adjusting my tie, Miguel behind him.

"You look very handsome Alpha."

"Thanks Miguel."

"What about me?" Luke pouted.

"Handsome is not the word I would use for you." Miguel said and Luke blushed.

"It's almost time. We should go down."

"Right."

As we walked out of the packhouse and made our way to the now transformed training yard, I prayed hard that everything would work out tonight.