

Chapter 46

Lily

I watched Clara drool over Ben's retreating form, a little smile on my face. Oh yeah, she totally wanted him! And knowing Ben, he had something up his sleeve to make her realize it. Hopefully, it wasn't too idiotic; I'd hate to have kick his ass.

"So, what's on the agenda for today?" I joined Clara, pretending I didn't notice the way her cheeks were flushed bright red.

"First things first. You need to shift."

I paused.

"If I shift, how will we communicate?"

Now it was her turn to pause.

"Shit. I should have asked Ben to stay, translate for you." Her forehead creased in thought.

"I can call him back." I said, ready to send out a mind-link.

"No, it's fine. We'll figure it out."

"Clara-"

"Just shift, Lily."

I sighed. However, I did as she asked, first taking some steps back. A few seconds later, I was looking down at her from Ayas eyes.

"Whoa." Clara breathed.

I realized, apart from Dimitri, Clara was the only one who had seen my wolf. Our friends knew I was big, but I wondered if their reactions would be the same when they actually saw me. Clara took a few minutes just staring at me before focusing on the task at hand.

"Okay Lily. And Lilys wolf. I want you to close your eyes. Focus on each other, on your bond as wolf and human. Cancel out everything else, except the sound of my voice."

"This sounds like a hypno-session. I hope she doesn't make us believe we're a chicken." Aya snorted.

"You're not focusing Aya."

"Right. Sorry."

It was hard; It went against all my instincts to turn off my senses. It left us defenseless, open to any attack. I worked for several minutes on tuning out the forest around me, the birds and squirrels, the trickling of the nearby stream, the leaves rustling in the breeze. Finally, all I could hear was the sound of my heartbeat, slow and steady and Claras breathing. I focused on her scent alone, turning my mind inwards and connecting with Aya.

"I can sense your aura... that should be sufficient as commination." Clara said. "Keep focusing on your wolf. You're trying to become one being, instead of two individuals in one shell."

I kind of got what she meant. After a while, I could feel it. It felt like a thick cord of steel, the thing that connected my wolf and I. Like I could feel my soul, see the very fabrics that bound us together.

"Good Lily. Reach for that, your connection. See it, embrace it." Claras voice sounded distant, so far was I into my own self.

And then suddenly, I could see it. A ball of white light, glowing and alive inside me. Inside us. I could see myself, and Aya. Surprisingly, I could even see Ajax and Dimitri. I guess that only made sense; They were our mates, literally a part of us now. I'd known it, but it was something else

entirely to physically see the part of the soul your mate gave to you. It was beautiful, raw. Pure. Hesitantly, I reached out with my consciousness, touching the light, curious what it felt like.

Instead of the light touch I'd intended, I was pulled into it, forcefully. Like a wave being sucked back into the ocean. I gasped, instinctively fighting back.

"Don't! Don't fight Lily!" I heard Claras voice, but it sounded like a whisper. I was caught inside myself, trying to understand what was happening. Images flashed around me, so quickly I couldn't make sense of them. Voices drummed into my ears, some I recognized, others I didn't have time to place. I felt as though my whole body, mind and soul were being flung apart at the seams, and then put back together again, over and over. It was confusing, disorienting. But surprisingly, and thankfully, not painful.

A force was trying to break free from me, but I didn't know where from. My mind? My body? Both? I couldn't focus on anything, while trying to hold onto to something sustainable. Something solid. Desperately, I reached for that force. It seemed to be the only thing not moving, only growing. I grabbed it, holding on for dear life. Still, it built and grew until it hit a wall, almost knocking me off.

"Let go Lily."

"Celeste?!"

"Trust me. Let go. Now!"

The next few seconds I couldn't describe if I tried. There weren't words. The next thing I knew, I was looking at Claras face hovering over me, my breathing rapid and erratic.

"Are you okay?" I read the words on her lips. My ears felt like they'd been filled with cotton balls.

"I-I-I..." I gasped. I couldn't push the air out of my lungs enough to form words.

Worry creased over Clara's forehead as she looked down at me. Ripping off a piece from the bottom of her shirt, she waved her hand over it. The fabric twisted and pulsed until it fell to the ground in a heap. Quickly, Clara used the magic-built blanket to cover my naked body, helping me to sit up. My vision blurred as my head spun wildly; I leaned against her for support.

"Goddess Lily. I'm so sorry! I didn't think that would happen!" Clara sounded as if she was close to tears, but her words confused me.

"W-what-" I tried my voice again, only to be interrupted by the sound of thundering paws.

Ajax burst into the clearing, his ears pressed against his skull and teeth bared. His eyes zeroed in on me, his tail twitching. When he looked at Clara, a vicious snarl erupted from him. I felt her flinch against me, frightened.

"What happened?!" Dimitri and Ajax yelled in my head at the same time. It was loud, much too loud. I winced.

"Clara didn't do anything. Don't be angry with her." I pled to them. At least I could mind-link.

Ajax trotted over to me, sniffing my hair, my face, my neck. He scanned every visible inch of me, snorting in relief when he saw I was unharmed.

"I thought you were dying Lily. My heart... no, my soul! It was... I don't know. It didn't hurt, but-"

"I know. I'm sorry. I didn't know you would feel it too." I apologized.

"Are you okay?" He asked anxiously.

"I'm fine. I think. I think I just need to sleep. That was... intense."

He walked away to shift. When he came back, he was donning a pair of men's shorts. Clara instantly started sobbing, startling me.

"I'm so sorry Alpha! I tried to call out to her, but she couldn't hear me. And then she started to change, and I panicked, and-"

"What are you talking about? What do you mean she 'changed'?" Dimitri demanded.

"H-her fur... it was white and then it started to grow black...."

I blinked at her, shocked. Clara sniffled, wiping her eyes. Ben chose that moment to run into the clearing, Luke right on his heels. As soon as he saw Clara, he was by her side in an instant, wrapping her in his arms, and shoving me to the side.

"Ben!" Dimitri roared. He caught me before the blanket could fall, exposing me.

"Sorry." Ben rushed an apology to his Alpha before focusing on his mate. "Are you okay?! Why are you crying? What happened?"

"Lily..." Clara mumbled.

"Did she hurt you?"

A growl tore through the clearing, louder than I'd ever heard before. Dimitri's eyes turned black as he glared at his Beta.

"How dare you-"

"Stop!"

I mind-linked Dimitri but every head snapped in my direction, shock dominating their features.

"Did she just...?"

"How?"

"What the fuck?"

Dimitri didn't say anything, simply staring at me with his mouth open.

"What?"

"Lily... did you just mind-link the whole pack?" Dimitri gasped. Huh?

"No?" It came off as a question. Had I? And even I did... "But you do it all the time?"

"Because I'm the Alpha. But you shouldn't be able to."

"It wasn't just your pack. I heard it too." Clara said. Now everyone turned to her. "It must be one of your abilities. To mind-link with other species."

Nobody seemed to know what to say. We all just stared at each other, eyes wide. At least, theirs were. Mine were drooping more every second. I rested my head on Dimitris chest.

"Tired." I whispered. My voice sounded raspy. I needed a drink badly.

"I'll take you home."

Carefully, he picked me up, making sure not to uncover me. I snuggled into his warm embrace, sighing. The others talked while we walked, but I didn't pay much attention. I did hear Dimitri apologize to Clara, and Ben apologize to my mate. After that, I tuned out completely, inhaling Dimitris scent. I called out to Aya, wondering if she was okay.

"I'm here."

"Oh, thank Goddess. Are you good?"

"Yeah. It took more of a toll of you than it did me. But I'm just as tired. Can we talk later?"

"Sure."

I felt a light imprint on my forehead, probably Dimitris lips, before I gave myself over to sleep.