Chapter 53

Lily

The smell of blood hit me, forcefully. I acted quickly, shoving Dimitri away from me towards the hall.

"Go! Find Ben and Killian and bring them back!"

He nodded, running away through the bushes. I took a second to acknowledge that he was actually trusting me this time. Then I was running in the opposite direction, kicking off my heels into the bushes so they wouldn't slow me down. The garden abruptly ended, giving way to a spacious field of grass. The forest lay beyond, dark with looming shadows. I hardly paid attention though, as I followed my nose to the body lying on the ground. Her eyes were wide and staring, but seeing nothing. her once ash blonde hair was matted with the blood that pooled from her grotesquely slashed neck. Her midsection has also been ripped open, intestines spilling out.

My stomach rolled, bringing up everything I'd had to eat or drink. I doubled over, retching violently onto the ground beside the mutilated corpse.

"You need to calm down! We are not alone." Aya warned me.

I wiped my mouth with a shaking hand. My wolf pushed forward as my eyes roamed over the trees, through the shadows. Sure enough, a figure stepped out in my direction. It was a large grey wolf; one I was sure I'd never seen before. He snapped his jaws at me, growling.

"He is not a rogue?"

"No."

Whoever he was, he clearly wanted a fight. I shifted quickly, my clothes a lost cause. I looked down at his grey self, baring my teeth. To my surprise, he let a wolfish grin spread across his face. Then he turned and ran into the forest. Just like before, red flags popped up. Something was wrong.

I looked down at the girl in the grass. My heart wrenched as I realized how beautiful she was, had been. And so young too.

"Paige!"

Alphas and Lunas and the like were hurrying towards us. Most everyone was stopped, staring at me. Except one man, who ran to the girl's body. Throwing himself onto the ground next to her, he started to sob brokenly.

"Paige! My daughter, my sweet daughter."

I took a couple steps away, wanting to give him space.

"Who is responsible for this?!" The Alpha barked. His eyes landed on me and narrowed into slits. "You! Monster!"

I whimpered, stung by the word.

"It was not Lily!" Dimitri shouted, but the man did not listen.

"Shift beast!"

I instantly did as he asked. His face was torn with grief and rage. Using his Alpha speed, he jumped to his feet only to slap me hard across the face. Tears jumped into my eyes. Dimitri was in front of me in less than second, his hand around the Alphas throat.

"You dare protect her!? Look at my daughter! Look at what she did!"

"Calm down Richard! It could not have been Lily. She was with me when we heard your daughter scream." Dimitri shoved him away from us.

"Of course you would defend her! She is your mate! I don't believe you!"

I got my voice back, leaning around Dimitri to look at Alpha Richard.

"Alpha, I swear, I didn't. I would never! There was another wolf, a big grey one-"

"Bullshit!" He shouted. "You lie! I know what you are." He glared at my mate. "You should have warned all of us about her! Mother Wolves are monsters, untamable. She will kill again, just like tonight. She should be put to death!"

My heart started to race in my chest. I was horrified that everywhere I looked, people looked back at me with worry and fear. Disgust even. Like I was indeed a monster, out for blood.

"I-I didn't..." I tried again. I was scared. Would these people turn on me? Even Dimitri couldn't hold them all back, not even with the help of Ben or Killian. They wanted answers, answers I couldn't give. Alpha Richard wanted blood, blood for his lost daughter. Undoubtedly mine

I felt an odd sensation growing inside me, and panic took over. Now was not the time for me to show I had abilities! I couldn't contain it though; the feeling only being fueled by my feelings.

"Aya! Help me! Stop this, please!"

"I can't Lily. This needs to happen."

"No!" I shouted.

My legs gave out, the voices that were shouting around me drowned out. My vision tunneled, going black around the edges. I fought it back with everything I had, but it wasn't enough. My nails dug into the Earth, ripping out the grass. My eye caught sight of my arm, beyond shocked that it had a light golden glow around it.

"Give me control." Aya demanded. I didn't argue, just let myself be shoved to the back of our mind.

I watched as we stood up, walking towards Paige's body.

"What are you doing?! Get away from her!" Alpha Richard shouted, but made no move to stop me. Like everyone else, his eyes were wide with fear, afraid of what I would do next.

"I will reveal what truly happened here." Aya voice came from my lips.

Kneeling beside Paige, Aya placed our hands on her forehead. The glow around us peaked, grew until it was shone. Gasps and shouts came from the crowd. Then, an image slowly materialized in front of us. It was hazy, reminding me of a mirage. Shadowy figures moved around; their voices muffled. And then, as if a veil had been lifted, the image became clear for all to see.

Two people stood embracing. One was Paige, and unexpectedly, the other was Connor. Questions danced on my tongue, but I kept them in, watching from inside my mind.

"I am so happy you came to see me! I missed you." Paige said.

"I as well. You are very important to me Paige."

She smiled, her whole face lighting up. "I think I might be in love with you Connor. I truly hope we are mates."

I almost puked again. She wasn't even eighteen?! They kissed again, heatedly. I watched as Connors body tensed. Another person entered the vision, a girl I did not know. She was tall, strong looking. She carried some sort of stick with her. Long metal daggers were attached to the end, hooked at the ends like claws. She walked casually towards the unlikely couple, a smug smile on her face.

"I am sorry for this Paige."

"Sorry for what?"

Connor pushed her away from him roughly, shifting into his wolf. His grey wolf. I was screaming inside my head, wanting to prevent what I knew was going to happen next. Aya held me back, reminding me it was

already done. I watched helplessly as Paige turned to the mystery girl. Her eyes opened wide, a terrified scream leaving her mouth. The scream Dimitri and I had heard. The sound was cut off with a choked gurgle as her throat was slashed and ripped open. Paige fell to the ground, holding her neck.

"W-W-W-" She looked at Connor, tears running down her face. Her expression was utterly heartbreaking. Unconcerned, Connor used his paw to push her to the ground, and watched as her insides were torn out. He turned away from the girl who had moments before professed her love for him, eyeing the woman who'd murdered her in cold blood.

"You know what to do. Get into the trees and wait for Lily."

What the fuck?

Connor nodded once, racing off.

"That was gruesome."

A voice floated through the image to my ears, instantly making my blood boil. Jennine appeared, kneeling down beside Paige's body.

"It looks good. Disgusting, but good."

"It's sad you still doubt me."

"Whatever. Get lost, before someone sees you."

"Let me know how everything works out." She walked off, swinging her makeshift weapon over her shoulder. As if she hadn't just brutally murdered someone. And I was the monster?

Jennine stood, stepping away from Pages body, her face radiating smugness. "Sorry girl. I feel kind of bad, having Connor play with you like this. But Dimitri is more important, even more than your life." She walked away, into the forest.

Everyone watched as I ran into the vision. They saw Connors wolf appear, and me shifting. It ended with Alpha Richard kneeling by his daughter, dissolving into the air like smoke. Abruptly, Aya gave me back control, and I slumped over the girl under me, every ounce of energy leaving my body. I felt the sparks as Dimitri lifted me away from her, cradling me into his arms.

Nobody moved. Nobody talked. The only distinguishable sound was that of Alpha Richards sobs. They filled the air, gut wrenching to hear. Alpha Killian and Ben moved to him, patting his back and trying to console the broken man.

I felt wetness land on my cheek. I looked up into my mates' face, my heart twisting when I saw the tears running from his eyes.

"This is my fault." He choked out.

I opened my mouth to deny it, to tell him it was nobody's fault but Jennine's, when her voice broke through the clearing.

"You're right. It is!"

Every head turned to her. She stalked out of the forest, her hand tightly grasped onto something. A noise I'd never made before left my mouth when I realized it was Connors head. His mouth hung open; his eyes glassy. Blood dripped from his severed neck, staining the grass. Jennine tossed the head towards us, letting it come to a stop in front of Ben.

"Why?" I asked her.

Her laugh filled the emptiness, the sound crawling down my spine. She sounded insane.

"Why?! Because of you!" She pointed at me. "You waltzed into my home, took everything, everything away from me! Do you even know how hard I worked to get where I was? How many women I had to get rid of?!"

She turned her mad eyes on Dimitri.

"And you just threw it all away, threw me away, for a slave! I could have ruled Blood Moon by your side. I could have brought our pack to fruition, made it the very best. I would have helped you be the most powerful Alpha around. I would have killed for you!" She shrieked. "I did kill for you!"

Dimitri shook his head. "Not for me. You did this for you."

Was I the only one who noticed Alpha Richard had stopped crying? He was staring at Jennine with more hate and rage I'd ever seen on anyone. His body was shaking, vibrating. I saw his claws extend.

"Everything I did was for you! I had to endure sleeping with hat useless mutt-," She pointed to Connors head,"- for you! I had this bitch killed, for you!"

A terrifying roar echoed around us at her words. A giant brown wolf stood where Alpha Richard had sat, his eyes flat and teeth bared. With no hesitation, he rushed Jennine, claws aimed for her face.

And she disappeared.

Richard's wolf landed on the other side of where she once stood, falling to a heap on the ground. He jumped to his feet, looking around for his prey. But she was gone.

In her place however, now stood a tall, finely dressed man. He had salt and pepper hair, and a sophisticated trimmed goatee. Alpha Richard snarled at him, snapping his jaw. The man waved his hand lazily towards the wolf. I watched with a horrified face as his eyes grew heavy and he slumped to the ground, unconscious. Ben and Killian were at our side in seconds, both taking fighting stances. The man turned to us, eyes going straight to me.

"Gideon." I whispered.