

## Chapter 69

Lily

It was weird. You know those nights where you close your eyes, intending to sleep, and the next thing you know, it's morning? Almost like you simply blinked? That was me. One minute, I was recovering from Ajax ravaging me, the next I was stumbling around the woods. Aya was not present; I couldn't feel her in my head at all. I looked at the dense bush around me; I wasn't in Blood Moon anymore. The trees were too green, covered in moss. Large rocks jutted up from the ground, also covered. The air smelled fresh, unpolluted, and it was a little chilly. Birds squalled above me, an owl hooted somewhere in the distance.

Had I been kidnapped? Had Bastian finally made his move?

"No child. I am very much the opposite of that man."

I spun so fast I almost tripped. Celeste stood before me, looking otherworldly amongst the trees and rocks. A soft smile played on her lips, her eyes warm and loving. Having her so near filled me with a sense of peace.

"Why are we here?" I asked.

"Because I need to talk to you."

"No, I mean here. Last time you brought me to a meadow."

"A change of scenery is sometimes healthy. But we can go to the meadow, if you prefer."

"Uh, that's okay." If she liked the mossy forest, who was I to complain?  
"So... what's up?"

"Walk with me Lily."

Without waiting for a reply, she turned and began walking away from me through the trees. She made no noise, as if she wasn't touching the Earth beneath her. Shaking my head of distracting thoughts, I made my feet move after her. We walked for a while in silence, me stealing glances at her every so often. Did the Moon Goddess call me away for a leisurely stroll through the woods? That seemed unlikely, but I guess anything was possible. Ten minutes later, I was about to ask her why I was here when she finally spoke.

"I can see you liked my gift." She eyed me.

"Your gift?" Her gaze went to my stomach. "Oh. Yes. I mean, yes, very much. I don't know how to thank you. I'm so happy." A huge grin broke out on my face.

"Your children will do great things." She replied. "I wonder though, if you would consider doing me a favor? The choice is up to you."

"Of course." How strange it was, the Moon Goddess asking me for a favor. Celeste looked into the woods, her eyes landing on a particular spot. I followed her gaze, squinting into the bushes. After a few moments, a beautiful wolf appeared some distance away. It was sleek, quick, and an irregular color of black and white. Celeste held out her hand as the wolf stopped in front of us; I noticed it was a female. She sniffed the Goddess's hand before pushing against her adorably.

"Lily, I would like you to meet Nia. Jennine's former wolf."

I stopped breathing for a second. This was Jennine's wolf? How could something so beautiful live alongside someone so ugly? I felt bad for her, having to put up with a human as disturbed as Jennine.

"Did you say former? Wait, does that mean Jennine is dead?" I asked.

"No. She still lives." Celeste answered.

My forehead creased. "If she's alive, why is her wolf here?"

Tears gathered in Celeste's eyes, stunning me. Her next words, even more.

"Because Jennine killed her."

The noise I made was foreign to my ears. It was somewhere between a gasp and a scream. She killed her wolf? Her wolf?! How? Why? Our wolves were a part of us, a part of our very souls. I knew; I'd seen it! Aya was as much a part of me as Dimitri and Ajax now were. How could Jennine rip out a piece of her soul? Nobody was that cruel. Were they? Tears ran down my cheeks as I looked at the magnificent creature in front of me.

"Why?" I whispered.

"Purely selfish reasons. But it is done. Jennine made her choice, and Nia was sent back to me, long before she was meant to."

"That's...I can't believe it."

"I could not either." Nia looked between us, sitting back on her legs. "I chose Nia for Jennine in the hopes that she would take her down the right path. She is a calm wolf, a peaceful one. But smart, and strong. It seems my effort was wasted though." Celeste frowned. "But I would remedy my mistake, if you will allow it."

"Jennine does not deserve to have her wolf back." I spat.

"No, she does not. Nia deserves someone who will love her, appreciate her. That is the favor I'm asking you."

I blinked a couple times. "You... you want to replace Aya?" My heart hurt at the thought.

"Of course, not dear. I would never separate you from Aya. You two were made for each other. What I am asking is if you will allow Nia to become your pups wolf."

"Which one?"

"Whichever you choose."

"What about my other pup?"

"You believe I will give the other a wolf less than this one?"

I shook my head frantically. "No, no. I know you wouldn't."

"All I seek is a good person for her." Celeste waved her hand toward Nia. "A second chance. She has been through so much, so much unnecessary pain. It is your choice, as I've said. I will not be offended if you decide not to; I would understand, given everything her former half has done to you."

I bit my nail, thinking it through. "Will Nia remember Jennine?"

"No. I will give her a fresh start. There is no need for her to have those memories, to suffer over them. But her personality will remain the same."

I looked at Nia, really looked at her. Her eyes were sad, full of pain. Clearly, she still remembered everything right now. How much pain did Jennine inflict on her in order to remove her? The thought made my stomach roll. Celeste was right; Jennine was selfish. She never should have gotten the privilege of having her wolf in the first place. She would have fared better as a human. I couldn't talk to Aya, but I knew what she would say if she were here. I knew I was making the right choice.

"I'll do it." I said firmly. Celeste beamed, pride filling her eyes. Nia jumped at me, licking my face with her huge tongue. I laughed, scratching her behind the ear. "Welcome to the family Nia."

"I cannot tell you how happy I am Lily." Celeste said.

"It was an easy choice." I replied truthfully. I looked her in the eye over the wolf's head. "Will she have the same name?"

"No. But you will find out in eighteen years."

"I can't wait."

"There are struggles ahead Lily. Remember that I am always with you. I love you, my child."

Just like our last meeting, Celeste leaned in and kissed my forehead. The next thing I was aware of was an icy cold wetness drenching my face. I scrunched my eyes, raising my hands to shield from the uncomfortable feeling.

"Lily? Lily! Darling, please open your eyes!" Dimitris voice pounded into my ears and bounced around my head. Ouch.

"Quiet." I mumbled.

"What?"

"Voice. Down. Quiet!"

"Sorry. Here." I felt his hands on my back, helping me to sit up. Opening my eyes was a bad idea; Covering them with my hands, I begged him to turn them off. Sparks went up my arms as he removed my hands, cupping my face. I was still in bed, but someone had thrown one of his shirts over me. Thara stood beside me, worry etched onto her face.

"Are you okay? You fainted." Dimitri said.

"I'm fine."

"I'm going to take your blood pressure." Thara went to move away, but I caught her wrist.

"I am fine. Honest."

"Lily, you fucking passed out. You've been out for almost ten minutes!" Dimitri's voice shook. I placed my hands over his on my face, trying to reassure him.

"Dimitri, listen to me. I didn't faint. I was... I guess you could say I was called away?"

"What are you talking about?" Thara asked.

I smiled. "Celeste."

"Celeste? You mean, the Moon Goddess?"

I nodded. I told them everything, from the first time she'd summoned me during my first shift and now. Dimitri and Thara stared at me with wide eyes, mouths dropped to the floor. I grabbed my mate's hand, explaining what Jennine had done, and that I'd chosen to give her wolf to one of our pups.

"She... she killed her wolf?" Thara whispered.

"That's fucking sick!" Dimitri was horrified.

"I know. But you'll see her again. Dimitri, she's so beautiful. I couldn't ask for a better wolf for our pup. Whichever one she goes to. And Celeste promised the other baby would get a wolf just as good. I couldn't pass her up, I just couldn't."

"I'm not mad darling. If anything, I'm extremely proud that you gave her a second chance. It sounds like she deserved it."

Thara scoffed. "Anyone would, having that bitch as their other half! Goddess, I can't even process this!" She paced beside the bed. "How sick in the head do you have fucking be to do something like that?! I swear, if I ever get my hands on Jennine, I'm going to fucking wring her neck!"

"Calm down Thara." Dimitri tried to soothe his siter but she shrugged him off.

"I will not calm down! I hope she suffered so much more than that wolf! And why is it so fucking hot in here Dimitri?! Goddess, open a window or something!"

I looked at my mate, then at the open balcony doors. At the same time, a familiar scent drifted to me. I opened my mouth to tell him to wait; I wanted to calm Thara down first. But Killian threw open the door, startling all of us. His eyes were big, focused on my sister-in-law. He was sweating buckets, breathing in shorts gasps. Thara stopped mid-pace, staring at him like I stared at bacon nowadays.