

## Chapter 78

Lily

Why did this place have to be so big? I had no idea what was going on outside, but I knew it when Dimitri got hurt. My leg started to burn fiercely, but I knew it was his pain. I'd almost turned back, but I wasn't leaving my mom here.

"Mom! Mom, where are you?" I shouted. Nothing. Okay, next floor.

I raced up the stairway, throwing open the door at the top. A loud grunt left my lips when I collided with someone on the other side.

"Mom!"

"Not quite."

Shit! I should have counted on Bastian leaving someone to guard the castle. Instinct took over, and I swung my arm out, catching the rogue off guard. He stumbled backwards, holding his jaw. Using a trick Dimitri taught me, I quickly angled my left foot behind his right, placing my hand around neck and propelling him back. He went down, me landing on top of him. Not wanting to waste time in an all-out brawl, I reached between his legs and grabbed his jewels tightly in my hand, twisting slightly when he bucked under me.

"Tell me where Rosalie is. Or you'll lose the only thing you're probably still proud of."

"Fuck you!"

I twisted harder, feeling something pop under his clothes. He shrieked loudly, tears forming at the corner of his eyes.

"Tell me!" I shouted.

"Okay, okay! She's in the last room on the right! Please, let go!"

I did, but not before twisting my hand all the way around. I left him on the floor, crying and holding himself while I ran to down the corridor. I'd barely come to a full stop before I pushed on the door. Which was locked. Of course.

"Mom! Are you in there?" I banged on the heavy wood.

"Lily?" Her voice came from the other side, small, but audible.

"Yes! Can you unlock the door?"

"I can't. It locks from the outside."

I looked at the guard again. He was still writhing on the ground, cursing the Goddess and somebody's mother. I jogged back, standing over him and cracking my knuckles. He peered up at me with a terrified expression.

"Keys. Now." I demanded.

"I-I don't have them! I swear! I was only put here to keep watch; I don't have them!" He gripped his package tighter, waiting for me to strike.

"Then break down the door!"

His face morphed into disbelief. "I can't even stand, how am I supposed to break down the fucking door?!"

Grabbing his collar, I lifted him so our eyes met.

"I'm running on limited time here. I can't access my wolf right now, so that leaves only one option- you. So, either stand up and help me, or I swear I will rip off what's left of your dick!"

I hauled him to his feet and gave him a shove in the direction of my mother's room. His hand still cupped his injury but he slowly made his way, me trailing behind. He glanced back at me, raising an eyebrow.

"I'll help you on one condition." He said.

I scoffed. "I'm not in the mood to negotiate."

"I want you to take me with you."

That brought me up short. "Huh?"

"Bastian is going to lose-we all know it. Just nobody wanted to admit it. I don't want to stick around and be killed. I've lost too much already, my pack, my family... I want a new start."

My head was starting to hurt. I didn't have time for this.

"I can't make that promise."

"At least let me leave with you. I'll go my own way from there. Just get me off this island."

"Fine! Now open the door!"

"My name is Dante by the way."

"I don't care if your name is Mary fucking Poppins! Door!"

Finally, he turned away from me and got to work. Together, we kicked the door repeatedly until, with one final blow, it swung open with a resounding bang. I stepped in and looked around. The room was bare save for one small, filthy mattress, an even smaller but equally filthy blanket and a bucket in the corner. A thin window was placed well above eye level, letting in a single stream of moonlight. My eyes fell on my mother, arms hugging her torso standing against the wall.

"Mom." I opened my arms and she took a hesitant step towards me.

"Lily... what's going on? I heard fighting..."

"Dimitri is here. He's come for me, for us. We're going home."

"Home..." She breathed. She looked around the room, and for a second, I wondered if I would have to drag her out of here. How long had she been

captive? Most of my life? I worried she would have some mental breakdown, refusing to leave. But to my relief, she simply nodded once and walked up to me. I allowed myself a brief moment of embracing her, this woman I didn't remember knowing but longed to have, before pulling away and taking her hand.

"Come on. We need to go."

"How are we getting home?"

"I'm not sure. But we are leaving."

"Bastian?"

"With any luck, he's already dead."

"Damn. Wish I could have done that myself."

I glanced back at her. Her eyes were filled with so much hatred and despise that I gulped. I think it was safe to say I got my temper from my mother. Over her shoulder, I saw the rogue, Dante, following us. We quickly made our way to the stairs, stopping at the top. I turned to him.

"You first. You want to leave with us, then you protect us first. Make sure it's clear."

"Fine with me."

I narrowed my eyes at him as he stepped passed me. His footsteps echoed off the stones as he descended, growing more and more distant. My mother and I waited at the top until his voice floated up to us.

"All good!"

"Come on." Taking her hand again, I led us down the stairs. Confirming there was no ambush waiting for us, I started to lead the way to the exit. Dante stepped in front of me, holding out his palms.

"Stop."

"What are you doing?"

He cocked his head slightly to the right. "It's quiet. I think... I think it's over."

My stomach started to churn uncomfortably. My hand pulled out of my mother's as I raced down the hall. Who had won? Was everyone okay? Was Dimitri, okay? I still felt our bond. What about Clara? And Ben, and Luke? These worries ran through my head as fast as my feet carried me to the doors of the castle. I almost tripped over them as I saw a tall figure coming up the steps. My breath hitched and tears formed in my eyes. And then I was running again, launching myself into my mates' arms. Finally!

I held him as tightly as held onto me, both of us holding back tears. I felt his fingers under my chin, lifting my face to his. His lips crashed down on mine with a passion so fierce, I swear my heart caught fire. Inside me, I felt Aya stir, acknowledging we were back with our mates. I kept my arms around him as he pulled back.

"I missed you so much." He sighed against my lips.

"I missed you too. How did you find me?"

"Clara."

"Remind me to thank her."

I peeked around him, stunned to see many rogues, now in human form, staring at us. I tapped Dimitri on the back, giving him a look. He sighed.

"They surrendered after I killed Bastian. They want to come back with us. I'm not up for it, honestly."

Mom and Dante joined us then. Dante walked past us into the crowd of waiting wolves, while Mom looked around anxiously.

"Rose."

I looked to where my father was standing with Ben and Luke. He was gazing at my mom with a mix of relief, hope, and fear. She took a small step in his direction, and then she was in his arms, him having transported

himself in front of her. I watched my parents reunite, both of them crying, kissing, unwilling to let go of the other. Which reminded me that I had a message for them. Pulling Dimitri along with me, we walked over to the emotional scene. I cleared my throat loudly, getting Gideons attention.

"I have something for you two." I said. Mom turned to face me; her cheeks stained with tears. There was no way to say this without sounding completely crazy, so I just went for it. "Grandpa says he's sorry. And that's he's proud of you, Mom, for never giving up." I turned to Gideon. "He wanted me to tell you that even though you weren't his first pick for his daughter, you were undoubtedly the best. He's sorry, and hopes you can forgive him."

My parents looked at me like I was, indeed, crazy. Both of their eyes were wide as dinner plates, mouths hanging open. It was Dimitri who broke the shocked silence.

"How?" He asked me. I smiled up at him.

"I'll tell you everything. Later. Right now, I want to go home."

"Home sounds good." Mom said quietly.

"Agreed." Said Dimitri.

Together, we turned to face the rogues.

"Those who want to come with us, can. But know this; Until I can trust you, individually, you'll not be staying in my pack. There is land between my pack and another that you can make home on. In time, if I deem fit, you may join Blood Moon, or our neighboring pack, or choose to go your own way."

I noticed Dante staring at me, and I gave him a nod. Dimitri tugged my hand, leading me down the steps and through the crowd. The smell of smoke registered in my nostrils, and I turned my head to a small fire burning under a tree.

"Is that...?"

"Yes." Dimitri answered without looking at me.

I looked back to the flames. "Good."