

## 4. Bluebells In The North

2457 Words

The excruciating pain was too much, and tears were burning Savvy's eyes. She did her best not to scream as her nails dug into the wooden surface of the library desk.

"That mother\*\*\*\*ing bast\*rd!" she gritted her teeth, calming Athena down as best as she could. The two of them were Alphas; they wouldn't be crying over a man even if it was their mate. Even if he was hurting them. Especially knowing what kind of man their mate was.

Savannah hated how the mate bond worked. When she found out about Zack's betrayal and escaped him with the list of traitorous packs who plotted to kill her brother, she made sure to try and reject him when she reached a neighbouring pack of werewolves where she was safe. But Zack did not accept her rejection. She still remembered how he stood there, on the border, naked and angry, his hazel eyes piercing her soul. And she spat out the words only for him to refuse to do at least that for her. He did not wish to set her free even though he wasn't going to be a real mate for her.

Unfortunately, since they were true mates chosen by the Moon Goddess herself, for their bond to be broken, she needed him to accept the rejection. And until he did, they were tied to each other forever.

Savvy hated it. Mates were supposed to take care of each other, love each other unconditionally, and do everything for each other's sake. But her mate only saw her as a good option for breeding strong pups and getting more power. This was all that she was to him, and it still hurt her more than anything else. She wanted to love and be loved, but all he wanted was a trophy wife. This was one thing Savannah wasn't cut out for.

After everything happened, Zack was gone because he knew that his cover was blown and that Gideon would be ready if they attacked. So he escaped, and they never saw each other again. But after about a month, she started to get these little reminders of his existence. The pains were rippling through her body in torturous sharp waves. As if someone was thrusting a knife into her flesh over and over again, and then twisting, twisting, twisting...

The first time she experienced this, she almost passed out, and it was Zara who found her. But it was Athena who explained to her what was happening.

"It's him," the wolf said, trying her best not to howl from all the pain, "It's Zack. He is..."

She did not need to hear that sentence since Savvy was clever enough to figure it out. Her mate was having sex with someone. It was so painful on so many levels, but she ended up laughing through tears. She laughed and she laughed while her elongated claws were leaving marks on the concrete floor. While Zara was holding her and asking if she had to call for help, Savannah only shook her head, squeezing her eyes shut. She did not want anyone's pity. She also did not want her family to be worried about her. All of them had enough on their plates already. So, she made Zara keep her secret, and this was one of the reasons they got so close in the past months.

Over time, she learned to tolerate that pain, to handle it better. She was almost used to it. Luckily, Zack's intimate moments with others were short. A few minutes at best. Not at all like their first night together, where they couldn't get enough of each other.

But Savvy slapped herself the moment she let her mind go there. They were done. Mate or no mate, she would have to kill him to get her freedom if he continued to be stubborn. Savannah swore she would never find herself in his arms again...

Two strong unfamiliar arms around her grasped her tighter, and this was when the pain finally became dull.

Hands? There were not supposed to be any hands!

"What? Who is this?" Savvy mumbled in frustration, trying to focus her blurry vision on the man next to her.

"Earth to the maid," she heard a familiar husky voice and blinked a few times. What was all this?

Savannah found herself staring into the face of the gardener she met earlier, his clear blue eyes watching her intently, brows furrowed as he scanned her facial features in search of some kind of explanation. It took her some time to come back to her senses, and she clenched her lips when she did, realising that he was a witness to her weakness. It was bad that he saw her so close this time. He was still thinking that she was a maid, and that part was good, but he would soon recognise her as a princess. It was inevitable. And who knew what he would be telling people then? It was an easy way to a scandal.

"Space to the gardener," she pushed him away and stood up, fixing her clothes. At least she looked decent. At this moment, anger for Zack filled her heart as the pain disappeared completely. He was done, and so was she.

Previously, he at least used to have his fun during the dark hours; now, it was still the middle of the day. Which was why she was so carefree and went to the library alone. Which in turn led to this situation.

"What was that?" The guy sat on the top of the wooden desk she used previously and traced the marks she left on the surface with his large calloused fingers. "You were... out of your..."

"Don't hear that sentence!" she ordered in her princess tone, only later remembering that she was pretending to be someone else. The gardener did not look pleased and hopped off the desk to tower over her.

"Or what?" he asked, his warm breath caressing her skin and his earthy scent enveloping her.

He was much bigger than the princess, much taller. With an aura of confidence around him that gardeners back in her kingdom did not possess. He was also brutish and still didn't even look clean.

"Or you'll regret this," she smirked, folding her hands on her chest. "The gardening section is that way," Savvy pointed with her index finger. "Hurry up. Your roses definitely need some work."

"Only because some crazy lady shredded them to pieces," he chuckled, amused by her sudden change of character.

"I heard she only did it because they were that ugly," she tried to get away from him, but he only bent lower, inhaling her scent and pinning his hands to the desk on both sides of her, which got her trapped. He was smug about it too, and Savvy's cheeks flushed red, but she still managed to keep her composure.

"No wonder you hate roses when you smell like forest owers," he was so close to her that his beard tickled her. Savannah never liked beards. Or man buns. Those were two things that she hated. But Athena, who was always very defensive about their personal space, was unexpectedly quiet now. As if she didn't mind the stranger being so close to them. "Bluebells?" their eyes met when she heard the word. No one ever guessed that on their first attempt. Not even Zack.

"Look at you," the girl rolled her eyes and tried to push him away, but he didn't move an inch, "a true master of your trade! You got my scent right. Congratulations! Now, would you excuse me? I have places to be. And I am not giving you a medal for any of this."

"Is that why you hate roses? Because they are more exquisite in comparison to bluebells?" he teased her, and she did not appreciate it.

"Exquisite?" Savvy huffed out a laugh, locking her gaze with the man in front of her. "Those weeds that grow practically everywhere, that come in every colour and still lack originality. Not to mention that they literally try to hurt everyone who touches them. How can you even compare this to the bluebell, a flower so rare it needs protection that only blooms once a year and in the most secret of places? Although maybe you are just one of those who likes... ordinary things."

The way she said that suddenly got to him for some reason.

"Are we still talking about owers, feisty maid?" the man's lips stretched into a smile.

"I don't know," Savannah raised her brow, "are we?"

He leaned lower, and his beard prickled her again, the closeness getting too much. However, for the first time since Zack, Athena was behaving. She didn't growl at the stranger, did not protest, did not make Savvy feel sick. And it was so new and liberating...

But she had to stop. It was one thing to pretend to be a maid, and it was another actually to kiss one of king Kai's men. She wasn't risking that much, considering that she already had a plan of action in mind.

So, no matter how tempting it was to kiss that man right now, she knew she couldn't. She couldn't give the northern royal siblings the gift of such a weapon against her.

The man's lips were almost brushing over hers when she twisted one of his arms quickly, making him lose balance and almost smack his face on the desk while she ran to the other side of the room.

She turned to take the last glance at him and giggled at his startled expression. He was probably the lady's man here and used to getting everything he wanted from the local maids easily, considering how confident he was. It was time to knock down his confidence a notch.

"Didn't you know you are not allowed to pick bluebells?" Savannah smirked, and the look he gave her was not what she expected. She expected disappointment or maybe even anger. But if anything, he was amused.

"They don't grow in the North, Little Maid," the gardener chuckled, and her breathing hitched momentarily.

"Too bad for the North," Savvy shrugged her shoulders. "They are beautiful in spring."

She turned on her feet and stormed out of the library, not wishing to continue this encounter. It was exciting but so wrong. And she couldn't afford it. So many people believed that princesses could have everything they wanted when in reality, most of the things were off the list. She couldn't get involved with a mere gardener for very many reasons. And it didn't matter if he made her smile sincerely for the first time in a while.

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Kai stood where she had left him. The feisty little maid with a sharp tongue that reminded him so much of someone...

She irritated him. But in a way that piqued his interest.

Which he had to kill, of course. His house was now full of women who belonged to important packs and kingdoms and who came here to compete for his attention. He still did not know how to get out of this, but one thing was certain – he couldn't insult any of them. So, a thing with a western maid was out of the question. No matter how good she smelled, no matter how attractive she looked, no matter how his wolf wanted more right now when he usually barely tolerated females seeking their attention... He came here to look for ways out of all this mess, and he couldn't get distracted.

This was exactly when he noticed the books that the maid was reading, and his mouth opened in shock. He lifted one of the oldest-looking books and saw the title on the thick ancient tome: "The Luna Trials Guidelines."

Whistling, he took it and quickly looked through the other books. He knew that at least one, and all of them were about the ancient traditions of the North. It was a good thing that it was literally impossible to study them so fast. He knew that the little maid worked for the western princess. The last thing he needed was for that woman to know all the rules about the event. So, he gathered all the books and went to his bedroom. No one would ever find them there, and no contender would be able to use them to gain an advantage over others. Not to mention that he wanted to study these ancient volumes himself in the hope of finding a loophole that would free him from this awkward situation.

On his way to his chambers, he found himself whistling one of the annoying lovesick songs he had heard on the radio while driving back home. Something so out of his character that he had to look around when he realised what he was doing and exhale in relief, finding out that no one witnessed it.

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Savannah found Kyle outside, and he showed her the way to her designated room.

"Just don't be angry, okay?" he snorted as he led her in the direction opposite the main building where everyone else was going. Savvy knew that something was up again, even without him explaining it to her.

"What, did Elene give me the worst accommodation possible?" she scoffed. After everything that happened today, it wasn't a surprise. It was something that she expected. But when they entered the dark passages that led to a very gloomy tower, she couldn't hold in her laugh anymore. It didn't look like this part of the castle was used much, but it was a great place to lock people away and forget about their existence.

"At least we are not the only ones here," Kyle pointed out, trying to lift her mood up. He didn't know that someone already did.

"Moon Goddess! Who does Elene Fionnlagh hate as much as me?" Savannah burst out laughing, and that was when a door opened right before the two of them. The princess gasped when she saw the one who had walked out, the one who would be her neighbour for the duration of The Luna Trials.

"I guess that would be me. Long time no see, Savannah..."

NOTE: How about the title for this chapter?