

## 6. Fresh Air

Kai was sitting through a pointless and boring dinner which his sister arranged. He, Elene and his Beta Lachlan were dining on the upper oor, and he could watch his so-called Luna contenders dining downstairs through the glass window. He could already tell that his last hope for the stupid trials was already dead. None of them was his mate.

"Big deal!" Elene scoffed. "You know that mates are overrated anyway. Sometimes the Moon Goddess likes to laugh and gives Alphas like yourself an omega mate! Imagine an omega queen! That would be such a joke!"

"My mate would never be a joke to me," Kai grunted. "Whatever rank or kind she is. A mate is a mate and this person is always given to us for a good reason."

"Whatever," his sister rolled her eyes, picking at her salad. "You know they are not given to everyone and you are getting too old for this, Kai. The North needs a Luna and I can't always ll in. One day I will get married and who knows... Maybe I will have to leave the North. Then someone will have to step up."

He gulped his wine, knowing that his annoying sibling was right. He had gotten away with it for too long.

"Marrying a random girl is not a great solution," he said.

"Then how about you don't marry a random person," Elene snickered. "We have known Penelope for many years. You are good friends. She is loved and adored by everyone here and she is also the only daughter of one of your strongest Alphas."

He knew that she would say that sooner or later. Penelope was her best friend and he knew all about their childhood dream. When they were children they made a pact that they would both marry lycan kings. That was a stupid agreement, but it got worse when Elene actually met Gideon and fell for him. Since then she started to work extra hard to get him and Penelope together.

And Penelope was indeed the perfect Luna option for him. If only he hadn't considered her a sister. Just thinking of kissing her or taking her to bed was gross.

However, for his kingdom, he was ready to do anything.

"Don't even try this," he cut his sister off and took another glance at the women. Each of them was beautiful in her own way and almost any one of them would make a perfect candidate, yet that did not bring any excitement to him.

"What you did was a bit cruel," Lachlan stated plainly. "We knew that he would have to marry in the next few years but you really sped up the process, didn't you? Not to mention that you cut his options significantly. He had a whole world of possibilities and now he has to choose between... How many women are there?"

"Nineteen," Kai sighed as he nished counting.

"Twenty," Elene corrected him. He just shrugged as he tried to specially count just the ones who resembled alphas' daughters. But maybe he took one of them for a helper instead. Never mind that.

"I still expect you to nd a way to stop this," he slightly growled at his sister.

"And I will if I absolutely have to," Elene wiped her lips with a napkin and threw it on the table, standing up. "But rst you will really give this a try. You will meet these girls and talk to them, get to know them better. And if after everything you still want to get rid of them, I swear to you, the nal task will help us. They will not nd fault with us."

"Fine," he grunted, scratching his beard.

"And get rid of that thing!" Elene pointed at it before she walked out. "You get away with this only before someone takes a picture of you."

"That's the whole point," Kai smirked. "They don't take pics of me while I have it."

"Well, tomorrow is the masquerade and at the end of it everyone will be taking photos of you and the contenders when the masks come off. And we need The North Star, not the woodcutter from the neighbouring village!"

The princess left before he could ip her the bird.

"At moments like this I am really grateful that I am the only child in my family," Lachlan chuckled.

"Laugh some more and I will marry you to her!" Kai let out a snort.

"If you really want to avenge yourself, you should marry her to that self-proclaimed white bear king and solve all our troubles," his Beta pointed out. And it was a joke. But not really.

"If he wants power, that would only make things worse," Kai admitted. "He would have a royal lycan by his side. What would stop him from murdering me and claiming the throne in the name of their children?"

"This would be where your children come to play," Lachlan stood up as well and walked to the window to take a look at the contenders. He whistled, running his hand through his blonde hair. "At least she picked you some hotties. Maybe having a sister is not such a bad idea after all."

"You can take mine anytime," Kai let out a chesty laugh. But then his smile faded. He remembered something. "You know, the last time I saw Gideon when he brought that new Luna of his... The way he looked at her..."

"Like a weakling?" Lachlan sneered.

"No, not at all. He loves her." Kai's eyes grazed the women beneath him. "This meeting would have ended the way all our conversations went if not for her. She... she completes him."

"Only because he is not a full package. Like all westerners," his Beta rolled his eyes.

"I would still prefer if one of these women was my mate."

"Look, K, I get all this good guy with a big heart vibe of yours. But I am not feeling sorry for you having to spend your time with all these beautiful women!" Lachlan laughed and shoved his shoulder in friendly manner. "I have to go and check on the security in the castle and around. We have so many new people here now. I need to take extra measures."

"Yeah, sure." Kai waved him off and was ready to go to sleep, when he heard his wolf.

"Later," Asgard's voice sounded impatient. "Go to the garden. I need some fresh air and a run. Or a hunt. A hunt will be better."

Kai knew better than to question his wolf's needs when there was no serious reason to deny him what he wanted. So, he left the building and went to the west gate, where he always went when he wanted to shift and run into the woods.

"Not there," Asgard grunted. "The pond."

"What did you forget there?" Kai asked and then the wind brought the delicious bluebell scent to his nostrils. "On another note, we didn't check this pond for a while! I wonder what its state is now!"

He hurried there, grinning like the i\*\*\*\* that he was. He knew that she was just a maid... No, that wasn't even right. She was princess Savannah's maid and absolutely off limits. He couldn't possibly touch her. But... he couldn't stop going in that direction either.

He saw her standing next to the water with her back to him. A thin silk robe was all that she had on and when her hands moved to the belt, he knew what she was doing. She untied the belt and the golden fabric slid off her delicate shoulders. The pond was illuminated from the other side and Kai could see the silhouette of the maid as if she was giving him a shadow theatre performance. Her enticing curves at full display for him.

And however much he wanted to see the show, he knew that it wouldn't be right. So, he chose to make himself known to her and stepped closer, knowing that she would smell his scent.

The girl inched and wrapped her robe back around her, turning on the way, the wind ruing her golden-brown wave locks. Kai couldn't help his grin stretching over his lips. After tonight, he was happy to see her again.

"What do you think you are doing?!" she scolded him as if he was guilty of something when he was clearly being a gentleman here.

"Me?" he tried his best to look offended even though he was amused by the whole situation. He also enjoyed the delicate blush that kissed her cheeks. It suited her. "I am just getting some fresh air. The question is what are you doing here? Are you trying to ash the guards?" he couldn't wipe the smirk off his own face. The tint on her cheeks became even more evident and he was enjoying that he made her feel this way.

"For a gardener who likes to spend his time in a library you aren't that bright, right?" she moved closer to him and he watched her, fascinated by the playful smile on her pretty face. He even missed the insult, feeling the warmth of her little body next to his. He liked it. He liked it a lot. Too much even.

"Enlighten me then," a smile tugged at the corners of his lips.

"What's there to explain?" She did not look impressed. "I was about to shift and let my wolf run. And what about you? These aren't your working hours. Were you just trying to nd someone to stalk?"

"Stalk?" a scoff escaped him. She was pointing her index nger at him, and he grasped her wrist, spinning her and pressing her back to a nearby tree. "Little maid," he was so close to her now that he could inhale her delicious scent all he wanted, "There is no need for me to stalk anyone. I already have more women than I can handle."

"This is not something to be proud of, you know?" she burst out laughing. She irked him. But also... she excited him.

Savannah couldn't believe the situation she was in. The gardener's beard was tickling her neck and his hot breath was burning her skin. It was a game to him and it was a game to her as well. A game which she enjoyed. For the rst time in a while she was enjoying something.

She jabbed him with her elbow and he let her turn to face him, but the moment their eyes locked, he pinned her back to the tree. Forehead to forehead, ragged breathing, his hands on her waist... She wanted to kiss that forenead to foreh with everything. She didn't care about the king anyway. And Athena was eager to do it as well.

She grabbed his t-shirt and wanted to pull him closer, when the familiar pain returned, piercing her whole body and almost making her scream.

"That son of a b\*\*tch!" her wolf growled in fure, ready to burst out and destroy everything just not to feel this torture of their mate's evident betrayal.

"Are you okay?" the gardener brushed his palm over her cheek and she leaned into it because she was so hot and his skin was the coolness that she wanted so much, that she needed. It was helping her and... it suddenly occurred to her that he could help her much better than this.

"Just kiss me already!" she hissed, and he didn't let her have a second to regret her words.

His surprisingly soft lips slammed into hers, his tongue thrusting into her mouth, demanding submission that she was never going to give him.

Kai lost it. He completely lost it with this strange girl. If someone saw him with this maid while his house was full of his potential Luna candidates, a scandal would be unavoidable.

If only he cared when she tasted so good, and when her scent was so intoxicating. He lifted her up, ngers sliding under the robe to dig into her perky bum. She wrapped her thighs and hands around him, making it so much easier. All while his hardness pressed right into her core through his jeans, making her moan and arch her back. The maid's frail neck opened up a bit and he hastily removed her soft silky locks away to start greedily kissing her delicate skin. She felt too good to be true, but he did not want to contemplate about it. Not now. Not when he was so close to having her.

The pain was long gone but Savannah did not care. Her life was already a mess. What could one little ing do? She hated her mate, she hated the northern king. So what if the gardener made her feel alive again?

She could feel this Kyle knocking into her mind. She shut the link and did not react. But he kept trying and this made her groan in frustration, which only ignited the gardener's re as his hands were searching for the ties of her robe.

She wanted him. She wanted him so badly!

But there was also her kingdom... And the people in it... Was it worth it to put them all in danger by kissing some insanely hot gardener?

She hated to admit it but Kyle already ruined the moment. The disturbance was helping her to slowly come to her senses.

"Stop," she muttered and to her surprise the digan who held her did just that. He stopped and looked at her questioningly.

"What is it, Kyle?" Savvy asked mentally.

"Where the hell are you! They said that apparently all contenders have to be in their room by nine o'clock. You are already late, and they are checking! Find a way back and do it quickly! I will try to hold them back or make a diversion."

"Got you!" Savannah closed the link and sighed.

The gardener looked at her as if he did not want it to end but knew that he had no choice.

"I need to go," the girl smiled but that smile did not reach her eyes.

"You must be kidding," he grunted in her neck, feeling how she unwrapped her legs and tried to get down. He did not want this. His whole essence was against this. But their eyes met again and he knew that she was serious.

"I need to nd a way to get back to our tower," she explained and he nodded, placing her back to the ground. She looked so worried that he couldn't bring himself to make her stay. "They are checking if people are back in their rooms and I am here..."

"Let's go," the gardener took her hand and pulled her in the direction of the buildings. "There is a back entrance for servants."

"Great," she mumbled as everything between the two of them became awkward again.

Kai thought that maybe it was for the best. What happened right now was pure madness. And he couldn't do that. Not now, not with this girl.

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5 minutes ago

Zack knew that there was only one way to remind his mate that he was still existing. So, when his Beta brought him the girl that reminded him of Savvy the most, he didn't hesitate. He didn't like to make it long either. All he needed was a rele'se and to send a message to his mate.

Yet this time was different. As he had hardly started when a piercing pain hit every cell of his body...

He growled loudly, throwing the she-wolf away and dropping to all fours on the oor. His claws were leaving traces on the wood and he almost shifted as his wolf wanted to run and go searching for their mate. The mate that was clearly enjoying someone's company now.

"Savannah!" Zack snarled, requiring all his physical strength not to follow his feral desires.

He didn't know when it ended and how long it lasted.

But he knew one thing – he needed to nd Savannah fast...

NOTE: Thank you so much for your patience. As I have said before May is my nal exams month, so it's a bit hectic for me and I don't have specic days for the updates. I try to update 2-3 time per week now and will try to post the next chapter tomorrow. But that will be an attempt, not a promise.

I also want to thank you for voting in the Dreame Ace contest for The Perfect Luna book and leaving your comments about it. It's incredibly sweet, and I am so emotional going through them. It really helps me to ignore the negative ones and focus on your support is overwhelming. Please, keep it up if you can. Your support means the world to me!