

Chapter 20

Daisy

The wind whips past us as we hurtle through the forest, branches snapping and leaves rustling under Yato's powerful paws. Fear mingles with exhilaration in my chest, and I squeeze my eyes shut, praying to the moon goddess that may listen that I won't be thrown off. Securing my grip on his thick fur, I hold on for dear life.

The ground beneath us eventually smooths out as Yato slows down to a gentle trot, signaling the end of our wild dash, I slowly open my eyes and unclasp my fingers from his fur, looking around at our surroundings.

We are now within a secluded glade, bathed in early morning sunlight and surrounded by towering trees. The air smells distinctly of pine and wildflowers.

Yato lets out a soft whine from beneath me-a signal for me to dismount. I slide off his back, landing ungracefully on the grassy ground beneath me...

As soon as I am safely away from him, he begins to shift back into his human form. It is a sight that leaves me both fascinated and horrified: bones snapping into place, flesh molding and moving before my very eyes. It is both grotesque and magical to

witness. When he's fully transformed back into his human form, he grins at me, completely unabashed by his nudity.

"Sorry about that," he says with a shrug. "I didn't think you'd appreciate riding all the way here in my arms."

I can't help but blush at his nonchalant nudity, turning my gaze hastily to the side not to see too much. His chuckle echoes through the glade, and I feel heat creep up my neck.

"There are spare clothes behind the tree," he begins walking towards it but pauses briefly. Or would you rather I stay naked for our training session?"

I can hear the oh-so-innocent smirk in his voice, which makes everything worse. Yato is just like his brother-too gorgeous! for his own damn good.

"But you have your mind set on Alpha Xavier, right?' Sera asks in a curious voice.

"Yes...why are you asking? Didn't you dislike Yato?"

"I dislike him less after seeing his six-pack."

"Perv!"

"Is everything okay over there?" Yato asks. He is already behind the tree, changing his clothes.

"Yes, I'm fine," I answer hurriedly, trying to steady my voice. But my cheeks are still burning, and I hope to the gods that he cannot sense my discomfort or worse, my attraction.

I quickly divert my attention to the bag I brought along, rummaging around inside as if looking for something specific when, in reality, I am avoiding looking at Yato while he changes. The rustling of leaves alerts me that he has finished and is returning.

With another of his signature smirks, he steps out from behind the tree, fully clothed in a black t-shirt and jeans; his feet are still bare, but it doesn't seem to bother him. He approaches me with a grace reminiscent of his wolf form.

"Let's get started," he suggests, his eyes gleaming mischievously in the sunlight.

"Alright," I respond hesitantly. "What are we doing exactly?"

"We are going to train your senses," Yato explains with contagious eagerness, "I think it would be very helpful for someone who can't shape-shift."

My heart skips a beat at that; turning into a wolf is a dream of mine, but I doubt that I can do it. I've tried and failed too many times to count.

'You can do this, Sera reassures me internally. 'Back then, you didn't have me. Things are different now!

"Are you communicating with your wolf?" Yato asks, tilting his head to one side with a curious expression.

I breathe a laugh. "How did you know?"

He grins. "See! I knew you had awakened. My brother is blind for not noticing it...or maybe he has noticed but is pretending to be blind," his fingers grip his chin thoughtfully. "That would make a lot of sense, actually..."

I watch him mumble to himself, his expression changing from snug to thoughtful. I have to stifle a laugh. Yato seems to be the opposite of his brother: easy to approach and much more human in his nature.

'Unlike a certain other grumpy Alpha...' Sera mutters.

'Are you still mad that Alpha Xavier gave us a house arrest as punishment?'

'Hell yes, which is why I'm worried about you. If he notices you're gone, there will be another punishment

I shiver at that, but try to focus on Yato. He is currently drawing a circle with a stick, digging it into the ground with his tongue sticking out.

"This will be our training area," Yato declares, stepping back to admire his handiwork.

"Does the circle have a meaning?" I ask, studying the lines curiously.

Yato chuckles, rubbing the back of his neck nervously, "Well, not exactly. It's more like a boundary. You are to stay within the circle during our training. It helps to focus your senses on a particular area. We will start small."

“Senses... like hearing? Smell?” I ask, keenly interested.

He nods, “Yes, and sight too. We will work on strengthening all of them. Are you ready?”

I swallow hard, feeling a rush of adrenaline-fueled by anticipation and nerves. “Ready as I will ever be.”

Grinning, Yato steps back and gestures towards the circle with an expansive sweep of his arm. “Ladies first.”

Shaking off my apprehension, I step inside the circle. The grass beneath my feet is slightly damp from morning dew, squishing between my toes.

Yato steps away from the circle and begins to pace around it, observing me as though he’s judging my readiness.

“Remember,” he instructs, his voice cool and even. “This is all about heightening your senses. Try to tune out everything else. Listen to the wind, the crunching of leaves beneath my feet Feel the earth beneath you, note the scent of the pines, of me, even.”

The moment Yato mentions the scent of him, I feel a jolt of embarrassment. But then I remember how important this is. I can’t stay a weakling forever; I need to pay attention.

“Okay, here goes nothing,” with my eyes closed, I try to block out everything but my senses, just as he instructed.

Good girl,” Yato chuckles. “If you keep being this good to me, I might even give you a reward.”

My lips twitch, but I don't open my eyes. "And what would that reward be?"

"Hmm, I'm not sure," Yato-says, pretending to ponder. "How about a week's worth of meals that you won't have to cook?"

My eyes snap open at that and find Yato grinning at me. I quickly close them again, but a smile finds its way to my lips. His playful banter is so different from his brother's stoic nature, and it's...nice.

"Alright," I chuckle. "Deal."

"Back to the task at hand then," Yato instructs, his tone taking on a serious note again. "If you want to learn how to shape-shift, we need to train you every single day."

"Every single day?"

"Is that a problem?" he challenges. "My brother won't marry your sister for a while. He still has his bachelor party, and she has her bridal shower. We have time before its time for you to go home, don't worry."

"Alright, Yato. Every single day," I say, determined.

He grins. "After a week, you and I will be besties for real. Be so sure of it. I'm very charming."

Snickering. I shake my head. "So I've noticed."

Yato chuckles before he clears his throat, and the forest falls into a hush again. "Let's start over. Close your eyes and focus."