OH FOR MATES SAKE

My heart felt like it was going to implode as I scoured his wide eyes and downturned mouth for any sign of a silver lining. The tension in the air seemed to thicken with each passing second. The weight of my despair was heavy on my chest, like a granite slab crushing me down. Each thud of my heart seemed to echo off the walls, each beat drumming in the fact that hope was draining away. I was almost grateful for Sion's grip on my shoulders; it was the only tangible acknowledgement of how hard the situation was to endure. I felt like my heart might implode from the pressure, our hopelessness now a physical force bearing down on us. My eyes brimmed with tears, my vision blurring until the entire world around me seemed to dissolve into a wave of despair. I gritted my teeth in a futile attempt to contain the tide of emotion inside me, but I could feel hope slipping away with every passing second.

"Kai…" Conner choked out, his usually strong voice barely a whisper, "He won't wake up. It's like his body is frozen. I think... he's fading..." I felt as though I was shrinking inside, but I tried to find the strength to stand tall. I turned to look at Sion.

"What…" My heart was pounding in my chest, and I had to fight to get the words out, "What do we do?" We had a fight to finish but I couldn't bear to leave Kai.

"Kai is our priority... he is our family. We will check on him before we plan the next move." Sion said, and I bit my bottom lip, nodding my head. Good. I needed to see him.

Conner led us through the dense undergrowth and into a clearing illuminated by the bright moonlight. Large, white tents had been hastily erected to form a

makeshift hospital, with beds and medical supplies spilling out from their openings. The smell of antiseptic and magic hung thickly in the air. The Chance pack wasn't far from here and their hospital would be better suited for caring for everyone.

"There are still wolves in the pack that may still be controlled." Sion said, as if he assessed my thoughts. I hadn't thought of that. I wanted to save my energy to fight. I nodded my head slowly as Conner pulled the tent flap to the side for us to enter.

Gia nervously sat at the edge of the tent; her gaze fixed on the bed at the far end. Logan hovered nearby, his body tense and his eyes unreadable. I tried to swallow the fear that had risen in my throat, but my mouth was too parched for even a drop of saliva. My feet flew across the room faster and faster as I neared Kai's bed. The anticipation weighed heavy on my heart, aching for what I was about to see.

My mouth hung open as my eyes scanned his body. His skin was a ghostly white and his usually fiery red hair was limp and lifeless. His shallow breathing came out in faint, quavering breaths, and his body looked so frail. I reached out and placed my hand on his. His body felt so cold that it burned my skin. I didn't flinch away but gripped him tighter hoping my heat could help. A chill ran down my spine as I felt the coldness emanating from him, like a gust of wind in the dead of winter. What the hell was this?

"We need healers." Sion commanded as he placed his hand over Kai's forehead.

"They already tried..." Gia shook her head as she stood up. "I'm going to get my Uncle Sam to look at him." She said as she reached out to pat Conner's hand. "I'll be right back." I felt her presence disappear but didn't dare look away from Kai.

"We will find a way to save him." Sion's baritone voice grabbed hold of me, forcing my eyes to look at him. His warm hazel eyes were determined as his gaze stayed fixated on me. "We will do whatever it takes. We aren't going to lose him."

I pursed my lips together as my nose burned. I nodded my head, unable to speak. This was my fault. Kai would never have gone to the Sulfur pack if he had never met me. He wouldn't be lying here with his life slipping away.

I heard a slight ruckus behind me and glanced back to see Gia, Sam, Stilts and an angry Epona.

"I don't do charity work." Epona snorted out as she stomped our way. Her eyes landed on Kai, and I watched as her lips pulled down.

Stilts reached out and hovered his cane over Kai's body. "We have to link her now if we want him to stand any chance."

"I haven't exactly agreed to anything, gramps." Epona snorted, but her eyes looked at Kai in sympathy.

"What are you planning?" Sion asked, looking up at Sam.

"There is a way to transfer energy from one person to another," Sam said, glancing over at Epona. "The thing is it is risky for most of us in Kai's situation. This energy is poisonous…" He said, pointing at Kai. "For all of us except… a kelpie."

"Will transferring the energy help him?" I asked and watched as Sam shook his head.

"No… but it will keep him alive." Sam said, looking at

me. "It will give time… time that he doesn't have right now."

"What exactly is this?" Sion asked and I watched as Sam shook his head.

"I don't know but I could feel the energy as soon as I entered the tent. As soon as Gia mentioned what was wrong, the little man here appeared dragging Epona with him." He looked down at Stilts waiting for him to explain.

"There isn't time. He doesn't have time!" Stilts growled and poked Epona with his cane.

"You can't force me! Do you understand what this will do?!" I watched as she talked through her teeth.

"I am well aware... little pony. Who do you think you are speaking to?! Would you see him die?" Stilts

snapped and Epona let out a dry chuckle.

The kelpie's eyes flashed with rage, her voice ringing through the air. "Now who do you think you are speaking to. I am a kelpie, not a simpering light fairy. Killing and death are my thing. Why should I suddenly have a change of heart? Because HIS life is important to someone else?!" I watched as her face twisted as if she was agonizing over something. "Do you think I can just wave a wand and it will all be alright?! I can't purify this with my blood. This is no mere poison… you know this. This is like a demonic curse. There is only one way I can save him…"

"Please!" I felt my voice plead, despite myself, as my eyes met hers. I expected her to turn away in disgust, but her gaze stayed fixed on me as she looked deep into my soul, searching for answers I wasn't sure I had.

"I..." Epona's lips curled down as she closed her eyes. "Damnit!" She spat between her teeth. "There is only one way I can link my energy to him and allow him to live... I have to claim him..." She paused and then looked at me. "I will—" She started to say and then Kai's body began to twitch.

I turned to him mortified as small tremors ripped over his body.

"They are losing him!" Sam yelled as Epona muttered curse words beneath her breath.

"Bloody hell!" I gaped as Epona bulldozed past Sion and flung herself towards Kai. Her hands were shaking as she reached out for his, their fingers entwining. A subtle blush crept up her pale cheeks, whether from exertion or something else I couldn't tell.

Her brows pinched together as she stared down at

Kai. "Quit fighting me." I watched as she placed another hand on his forehead and closed her eyes.

Epona's body trembled as she began to chant under her breath. The words were unfamiliar and seemed to echo with a deep force. Her voice was low and guttural, almost like a growl. I felt the air around them thicken, and the hairs on my arms stood up in response. I could feel the energy building up around the two of them, crackling in the air like lightning. It was a raw and powerful thing, something primal and ancient.

Epona's face was contorted in concentration as beads of sweat rolled down her forehead and her breathing grew heavier. She clenched her fingers over his skin and gritted her teeth, the effort of whatever she was attempting apparent in her strained expression.

"He is really weak," Epona muttered as she lifted her

finger up to her mouth. She pricked the skin and a small round ball of blood formed. I watched as she moved it with her finger, and it turned into a hardened ball. She moved the ball to Kai's lips, pushing it inside of his mouth.

"What are you doing?" Sion asked as he moved next to me. His hand reached for mine and he grasped it tightly.

"He needs strength and energy. My blood is pure and powerful. It will help sustain him." Epona's voice was strained as she spoke, her legs trembled slightly with the effort of holding her up. I was just about to get her a chair when Logan quickly pushed one up behind her. I watched as she gave him a tired smile of appreciation as she sank to the chair. She moved and interlaced her fingers with Kai's, and I could see the color returning to his face. He seemed to revive under her touch. His body was now warmer to the touch too.

"So, is he good now?" Logan asked, and I watched as Epona shook her head.

"No, this is all I can do for him. I will stay by his side and continue to offer my energy to him. He needs help..." Epona lifted her gaze to Sam, who nodded his head. As if some unspoken communication was spoken.

"I'll send a messenger out immediately. We will need to take Kai," he said, his voice strong and determined. My eyes widened as I snapped my head to look at him in surprise, expecting him to have a different plan. "He needs to go to Elysium. If anyone can help him... it is the royal fairies."

"You are taking him away from us?" Sion asked, and I glanced up to look at his concerned face. I tightened my fingers with his and looked at Sam.

"Yes, this is the best chance you can give him." Sam's gaze softened when he looked at me. "He may be there for some time, but don't worry. He will be in the best of hands there."

"He will be in the hands of the ONLY ones who can do something. Well, someone that can help... I doubt you can find a high-ranking demon to help us here." Epona said as she looked back at Kai.

"How will you transport him?" Conner asked.

"They will probably fly him out. Either with hippogryphs or maybe one of the dragon shifters will come." Sam looked from me to Sion, studying our concerned faces.

"He is no longer in eminent danger." Stilts spoke up and I looked down at him. "You have a job to do. And

then you will need to unite the packs. Kai will be safe in Elysium. They can send messenger fairies to keep you up to date on his condition."

My stomach twisted and churned when I realized there was no other option. We couldn't help Kai. Right now, he was staying alive through Epona. My brows furrowed as I thought about what she had done.

"What exactly did you do with Kai?" I asked warily, my brow creasing. Epona lifted her heavy gaze to meet mine.

"That will be a discussion for Kai and I to have once he has recovered." The intensity of her stare left no room to argue, and I knew something big must have happened. It was more than saving his life. I couldn't think about that though. He was alive and would be getting the help he needed. This is what was important.

"Kai..." I said, squeezing his hand. "If you can hear me... we love you. You had better keep fighting. Sion and I are going to put an end to all of this... so when you have recovered you have a place to come home to." I noticed Epona shifted uncomfortably but she didn't say a word. I stood to my feet and released his hand from mine.

"Please take good care of him." Sion said, his voice strong and firm. Epona nodded her head silently. "Let's finish this." He said, his gaze turning down to me.

We left the room with a heavy feeling in our hearts. Kai was fighting for his life, and Epona was the only one who could help him. We couldn't do anything to help him, except wait and hope for the best. He had to leave us and we weren't sure when we would see him again.

Sion grabbed my hand firmly, tugging me into his embrace, his strength radiating through my body. I looked up at him and saw a fire burning in his eyes. There was something we could do though... fight.