

## Chapter 17

Violet

I had an amazing day with Jaspers family. His Mom was super nice, and super funny. We talked for hours, with Elena sitting on my lap the majority of the time. Linda liked to write short stories in free time, and showed me some of her work. I had to admit, I was impressed; She was talented. She told me she was working on a series of children's books, some already published and sitting on Elenas bookshelf. Around four, Jaspers Dad came home, and he was equally as excited to meet me as his wife was. I liked him as much as her, with his strong, yet kind personality and his endless array of Dad jokes that made Jasper groan.

I was in love with this family, and I felt so grateful that they had taken him in. When Linda asked Jasper to run to the store around the corner, I gathered the courage to ask her about it.

"There was no question." She's said. "We were in the process of trying to adopt. We were told the chances of conceiving a pup of our own were very low, but we could keep trying. Your Mom was so nice throughout our struggle; She was my doctor. And then one night, we got a call from her, asking us if we could come to the packhouse. She said it was urgent, so we did. The last thing I expected was a little boy to be waiting there with her."

She'd smiled, lost in the memory. "He was covered in dirt, the poor thing, and he was exhausted. Your Mom made sure he had plenty to eat, and a nice bed to sleep in. Then she asked us if we would be willing to take him in. We said yes. Of course, we had wanted a baby, but how could I say no? I knew from the second I saw him that I loved him. And he's been our son ever since." She laughed, the noise tinkling in the air. "And then we got

our miracle baby, Elena. At first, I was worried how Jasper would take it, having a sibling. But I never had anything to worry about; He's always been there for her, always protecting her and looking after her. Her first word was 'Haspa', until she learned to pronounce his name."

What made me love them more was the fact that they always encouraged Jasper to remember his birth mother. She'd told me they would sit down sometimes and ask him questions about her, and then always remind him to keep her memory close. They were truly rare people, and I felt lucky to be a part of their family now. It made me see a new side of Jasper; a side he kept hidden from people. The love and caring he showed his family was completely different than the sarcastic, sometimes asshole I knew. And then Dylan had shown up, totally unexpectedly, and I feared there would be another spat like this morning with my brother.

Much to my surprise, Jasper had invited him and Brianne to where ever we were going today, and I was thrilled. The best part was there wasn't any awkwardness between Dylan and I; We chatted like friends as we walked through the woods, as it always should have been. He held hands with his mate carelessly, a small smile on his lips that never left.

"Thanks for coming along. I'm glad Jasper invited you." I told them.

"We missed you Vie." Said Brianne. "Sorry I've been MIA that last little while."

"I understand. Don't worry."

She smiled. "We should make plans, just the two of us. We could go into the city and have a shopping day."

"That sounds awesome. How about Saturday?"

"Perfect."

"I hope Garrett smartens up by then." Dylan grumbled. "I'd hate to spend the day alone if you're out."

My heart squeezed, my guts twisting. I shook my head, pushing my feelings down. I didn't like fighting with my brother, but he was the only one stubbornly holding onto something that everyone else had let go of. If he didn't find a way to move on soon, I'd have to get our parents involved. This anger of his was eating him from the inside out- It wasn't healthy.

Dylan walked ahead of us, joining Jasper and they started talking. Brianne sidled up next to me, giving me a look.

"So, you and Jasper huh?"

"Yeah, it seems so."

"And you're okay with it? With his... you know. Past?"

I looked at the back of my mate, catching him as he glanced back at me and smiled.

"I've learned recently that you shouldn't believe everything you hear. So, yes, I'm okay with it." I smiled.

"Have you guys done it yet?"

I almost tripped over a root at her words. "What?! No! We've only been mates for a day!"

She giggled. "Doesn't matter. As soon as you left, Dylan and I did."

"On school grounds?!"

"Yup." She chirped. "Man, can he ever-"

I covered my ears. "Okay! I love you, but I do not need details about your sex life!"

She laughed, throwing her arm over my shoulder. "Just wait girl. Sex with your mate is... unbelievable."

I nodded, but I kind of had to agree. After all, I didn't have anything to compare it to. Jasper would be my first, and my only. Even if he was

terrible, I wouldn't know the difference. Which made me wonder, how would I be for him?

"Stop worrying Vie."

"I'm not."

"You're biting your lip." She pulled my lip out with her finger. "It'll be fine!"

I lowered my voice, slowing my steps even more so the guys wouldn't hear us. Hopefully.

"But what if it's not? What if I'm terrible at it?" I whisper to her anxiously.

"Just go with what feels right. And if anything makes you uncomfortable, tell him right away. Communication is key. But I'm sure he'll take it slow with you. The first time anyway." She smirked.

"How much... uhm... does it really hurt? Like, a lot?"

"Not as much as you think. And definitely not as much as your shift. And it's temporary, it only lasts a minute."

"Okay. And how do I-?"

"What are you guys whispering about back there?" Dylan called to us.

"Nothing!" I squealed. I could tell my face was bright red, and both the boys looked between us before shrugging. Though I thought Jasper was hiding a smile.

"Well, here we are." He said.

I looked around, my eyes finding the most adorable log cabin. The wood was red, with a black shingled roof. Two windows faced us on this side, reflecting the sunlight, and I could see a little dock hanging over a large pond. A barbeque sat off to the side, along with an old-fashioned barrel filled with fishing rods. It was the picture of comfort, a forest getaway. I loved it.

"Wow." I said.

"I had no idea this was out here." Dylan added.

"I found out years ago. Dad helped me fix it up; It's actually just outside of pack borders, so be mindful of rogues." Jasper warned us.

Brianne looked around cautiously. "Do rogues come here often?"

"Not really."

"How far back is the border?" I asked.

"About ten minutes."

I nodded. I doubted rogues would come this close to the border. We were safe.

"I'll go set up the rods." Dylan said. Brianne went with him and I stopped beside Jasper, looking up at him.

"You come here a lot?"

"Yeah. Mostly when I need to think, or I just want to be alone. It's nice, yeah?"

"It's beautiful." I replied.

"I think your beauty only enhances what's here."

I laughed, my cheeks turning pink. "That was cheesy."

"But it made you smile. I'll count it as a win."

I grinned up at him, shaking my head. Slowly, he took my hand, guiding me to the cabin. It was even bigger up close, and now I could see a small firepit, with some previously burned wood inside. A push mower was tucked around the back, along with a meat smoker. Looking into one of the windows as we passed, I saw a nice modern fridge and stove, as well as a long island. A living area was beyond it, and I wondered if the whole place open concept.

"I don't have much here, yet, just the essentials." Jasper explained.

"Well, I think it's amazing." I said honestly.

"If you want, you can bring some stuff here." He rubbed the back of his neck. "I mean, you can come here whenever you want, but bringing some clothes might be a good idea."

"Thank you. I will, definitely." He smiled, my heart fluttering. Dylan walked over to us, handing Jasper a rod before offering one to me. Brianne grabbed the sodas she'd bought for us out of her backpack, passing them out. Together, we sat on the dock, talking and laughing quietly as not to scare away the fish.

I was positive I wouldn't be home anytime soon. I was about to call my mom when I realized I could mind link now. It was easy to forget, as I hadn't been doing it my whole life, but it sure was convenient.

"Hey Mom?" I focused on her, reaching out with my mind.

"Violet? What's up?"

"I just wanted to let you know I won't be home for dinner. And probably not for a while after."

She was silent for a minute before answering. "Okay. Where are you?"

"I'm with Jasper, Dylan and Brianne. We're at a cabin in the woods. It is outside of the pack, but only ten minutes."

I could feel her anxiety rising. I really thought we were past her freaking out.

"Should I send some of the warriors?"

"No, Mom please."

"Violet-"

"I'm fine Mom. Jaspers Dad knows exactly where we are, and if I really need to, the border is ten minutes away like I said. Can you just trust me? Please?"

I could almost hear her groan from here. "Fine! But I am sending an extra group to patrol the border where you are. They won't bug you though."

I didn't argue, because I knew that's the best I was going to get. "Thank you, Mom."

"Are you spending the night?"

I raised my eyebrows at her question. "Uh, I hadn't thought about it, but probably not. I thought you wanted me back by eleven?"

"I would, but... Since with your Jasper I just thought you'd like to spend the night with him." She finished in a rush.

I decided to be honest with her. "Mom, I'm not ready for that yet."

"Okay. Well, if you come home, then alright. But if not, you'll be at the cabin? You won't go anywhere else without telling me?"

"Yes. I promise."

"Thank you. Have fun dear."

"Thanks. I will."

I ended the link, breathing out a sigh. I had expected her to demand me home by my curfew, and not a minute late. But it seemed like she was easing up on me, a little bit. Admittedly, I did feel a little better about extra patrols.

"I think we've caught enough." Jasper said then. "Well, Dylan and I have anyway."

I looked in the bucket behind me, filled with six big fish. I stuck out my tongue at Jasper and he laughed.

"Who wants to do the deed?" Dylan asked, nodding at the bucket. Brianne grimaced, and Jasper looked away. I sighed, and stood. Dylan helped me move the bucket off the dock and onto the grass before turning and leaving me.

"Hey! Where are you going?"

"I catch 'em, I don't kill 'em." He called over his shoulder.

"You all are a bunch of wusses!" I called back.

Jasper brought me a knife and one by one, I cut off the heads of the fish, letting the blood drain onto the ground. He watched me work with a disgusted face.

"How can you be disgusted by this, when you want to be a warrior? Killing rogues is a lot messier than this." I gestured to the blood-soaked ground.

"That's different. If I kill a rogue, or anyone, it'll be a life-or-death situation. These fish aren't trying to kill me."

"Then you should have thrown them back."

"Little late for that now."

"I'll say. You're silly, you know that?"

"Oh, am I?"

I nodded as I sliced through the last fish. "You will catch them, but not kill them, but then you'll cook and eat them? It makes no sense."

He shrugged nonchalantly. "I guess I am kind of silly."

I giggled. He helped me carry the fish into the cabin where I put them in the sink to clean them. After that, I left him to work, as he appeared to be in the zone. I took the time to explore the cabin. The living area was cozy, with a nice big fireplace, reading chair and sofa. I wandered down the little hallway, opening a door that led to a white tiled bathroom and deep



tub with a shower. I'd definitely have to make use of that tub later; It looked relaxing as Hell. There was a door that led to a room filled with some boxes of books and other various items. I assumed Jasper was using it as a storage room for now. The last room was the bedroom.

A giant King size bed sat in the middle of the room, with a deep red comforter pulled over. Four pillows were lined up at the headboard, and cute, home-made looking tables sat on either side with lamps on them. A long wooden dresser was placed to the side, and a bookshelf filled with books beside that. Standing in front of it, I examined the titles, recognizing some of my favorites. I picked one off the shelf, skimming through the pages, surprised at how worn the book was.

"You Like Elliot?"

I turned to see Jasper leaning against the door frame. He was studying me carefully.

"He's one of my favorite authors actually." I held up the book. "One of yours?"

He nodded. "He's one of my favorites too. I've read that probably twenty times over."

"You know how to read?" I asked in mock surprise.

"Quite well actually." He responded anyway. He walked over, picking a book from over my head. "This is one of my favorites." He handed it to me.

The Philosophy of Aristotle by Renford Bambrough.

I gave him a skeptical look. "Seriously?"

He leaned over, placing one arm above me on the shelf. His eyes never left mine, and my heartbeat was starting to pick up.

"Want to know my favorite quote by him?"

"Sure."

"Love is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies." He recited and my breathing nearly stopped. "Pretty accurate, don't you think?"

He took the book from me, tossing it onto the bed before placing his hand on my cheek. At this point, I didn't think I could answer him.

"Can we try this kiss thing again?" He asked softly. I nodded mutely, excitement and nerves running through me. Jasper leaned in, and my eyes closed. When his lips touched mine, a single spark shot through me, running from my head to my toes. My stomach felt like it was full of butterflies, and my mind seemed to turn off. And then I was kissing him back, my hands going into his soft brown hair. I secured his face to mine, unable, and unwilling, to let him go. I pulled him closer, our bodies flushed together. Everything was heat and passion and sparks. A soft moan sounded from me and he grinned against my lips before pulling back. I looked into his eyes, my breathing come hard.

"Wow." I breathed. What a first kiss!