

Chapter 42

Violet

I bit my lip as nobody said a word to Jasper's end. The tension in the air was high and thick, I could feel it. Ashwell and King, standing to the left of us, were tensed, ready for any opposition.

And then...

I jumped as a deafening uproar took over the crowd. People clapped and cheered. Grown men had tears running down their faces, and women were clutching their children tightly. A sudden harsh feeling of pity took over me. These people had held no love for their former leaders, people who were supposed to be their role models and care takers. They were actually celebrating their demise. I wondered if Warrick knew, or cared, how little love his pack had had for him.

"The Goddess has not abandoned us after all!" A woman cried in the front.

"The Devil is dead!"

"Can they lead us? They are so young!"

"What will happen to us?"

"We are going to be a mockery!"

"Our pack will be targeted! This is bullshit!"

Seeking out the owners of the loudest voices, I eyed a group of men and women in the front. They were standing away from anyone else, as if in their own bubble. And they were all very nicely dressed, far better than any other pack member. Even better than me. These must be Warrick's friends.

"You have something to say?" I directed to them.

The man in front stepped forward. He had to be at least my dad's age, but with werewolves, it was hard to tell. He had shoulder-length black hair, dark blue eyes, and a chiseled face that might have been handsome if he weren't wearing a scowl on it. When he spoke, his deep voice drowned out the cheerfulness, full of mockery and criticism.

"You cannot possibly expect us to accept you as our new Alpha and Luna! What are you, sixteen? Have you even shifted yet?" He laughed, his buddies joining in.

"We've both shifted." Jasper replied evenly. "Very impressively, I might add."

The man scoffed. "Am I the only one who thinks this is some big joke?"

"Not at all." A woman in a red silk dress stepped forward. "My mate is right, this is ridiculous! We will not let children fill the roles us adults rightly deserve. We are far better suited in any case."

I placed my hands on my hips. "I suppose you mean yourself then, eh? News flash; If anyone other than us had the right to these titles, it would be Beta King and Gamma Ashwell, and their mates and families. Not any of you."

"You see how she speaks to me? Such a child!" Her voice carried over the crowd.

"Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't realize you were a ranked member ma'am. What is your rank, again?" I asked.

"I was the Lunas dear friend." She said proudly.

"Oh, well. In that case... shut it!"

The woman gaped at me, her mouth hanging open. I held my head high. "Oh, yes we've heard about you." I waved my hand at them. "The group of Warrick's friends that he was so damn proud of. Tell me, where is your

pride when you sleep in your great houses with real beds, and wear fancy clothes, while the rest of your pack is suffering? Where are your hearts when you see children completely malnourished from lack of food, while you go home or go to the packhouse and dine on fine foods? Don't bother answering, because I can tell you, you have no hearts! Any of you!"

"How dare you-"

"Tell the truth?" Jasper cut in. "Have you looked around lately? While you live in wealth, your own Beta and Gamma are struggling daily. The people who protect you are living under you."

"That was Warrick's decision!" Another woman called.

"And that matters? I'm warning you, you had best prepare yourselves. Changes are coming, starting tonight." He turned back to the crowd. "Starting tonight, I want each and every family to go home and take a detailed inventory on everything they need. Whether that be home repairs, clothing, food, I don't care. Beta King, Gamma Ashwell, and myself will make rounds tomorrow to collect as many as possible. Once we've received everything, we will start the work. A fair warning though, this will take time! As for jobs, finances, and the like, I leave that in the capable hands of my Luna, Violet."

I blinked, taken aback. I hadn't expected that, but warmth flooded through my veins. Jasper winked at me, making me blush.

"Yes." I said. "Please don't hesitate to come to me."

"And one more important announcement before we leave you." Jasper met the eyes of many people, his face serious. "From this moment on, I am terminating the practice of training children against their wills, and sending them into the field. From this moment on, every child in Silver Moon will have the choice to train, until the required age. From this moment on, the children of Silver Moon are no longer to be used as pawns!"

Another deafening cheer roared from the pack. Many dropped to their knees, sobbing and hugging their loved ones. Children stared at Jasper like he was the Goddess herself, coming to save them from Hell on Earth. Right then, I loved my mate more than words could describe, and I knew our children would look up to him just as much as these children did.

"You would risk our warriors like this?!" The black-haired man from earlier ranted.

Jasper turned steely, cold eyes on him. "This matter is not up for negotiation. Real warriors don't need to use kids as bait to win a fight."

The women in that group now looked more at ease. I saw several smiling down at their sons and daughters, giving them pats or squeezes. The men had no change however; Did they not care about their own children?

Jasper led me back across the stage and down the steps. Neither of us spoke to the unpleasant people, too caught up in others rushing us. I was pulled away by some men, who began bombarding me with questions and ideas for new jobs. Meanwhile, Jasper was discussing those in most need of home repairs and necessities. But I knew who really needed it most; Those like Marian. I was sure that would be his first focus.

"Luna Violet, the fields are still good for planting." An old man with a white beard pulled my attention to him.

"Yes, I noticed that too."

"We have no equipment though." Another said.

"If you make a list of everything you would need to start the fields back up, I will get started on it." I promised.

Their eyes lit up. "That would be amazing! I worked those fields most of my life. They were a reliable source of income for the pack once."

"Hmm... Perhaps you and I should discuss it more, in more detail. Can you come to packhouse tomorrow?"

"Sure!"

"Are you free for lunch? I will make us something while we talk."

"I will make the time for you Luna. Thank you so much." He gave me a toothy grin, him and his friends walking away with a little more bounce in their steps.

It took some time before we were able to make it out of the Hall. I promised everyone I would prioritize accordingly, and reminded them that the rebuild of Silver Moon would take time. They were nothing but grateful though, and seemed beyond happy at the sudden change in their fortunes. When the place was almost cleared, all those who were left were the outcast members. They too looked happier, but not nearly as much as everyone else I'd encountered. Cautiously, I approached them.

"If you could all follow us back to the packhouse, please?"

"Why?" A young girl asked.

I smiled. "Because that's where you're all going to be staying. For now, at least, until we can get you into homes of your own."

"W-what?" A man gasped.

"Of course." A hint of confusion laced my tone. "You didn't think we were going to help everyone but you, did you?"

They all looked at each other, wariness and hope in their faces.

"Uhm..." I cleared my throat, "Is there a reason you guys were living... well... kind of outside the main pack?"

"We were placed there by Luna... I mean, by Anne." A man frowned. "We used to work in the packhouse."

"I'm confused."

"Alpha Warrick had... a preferable taste in those who worked in his home." His mate, I assumed, spoke up. "None of us fit that profile, and there were

no other jobs. When we couldn't afford our taxes anymore, Anne said we were no better than rogues. So, she had us moved instead."

I clamped my lips together. Hearing more of Annes disgusting choices had me wanting to lash out, and I didn't want to aim my anger at the wrong people, the victims of her. Instead, I took a deep breath through my nose, glaring at the ceiling.

"That woman is a monster." I mumbled. Louder, I said, "I won't have pack members living like that, ever. Please come back with us."

"You don't have to ask us twice!"

"Thank you, Luna!"

I smiled. "I'm sure there are rooms available. I haven't been through the house..."

"Trust me, there are rooms. That old man has more room than he ever needed."

"It's settled then. We will discuss getting your old jobs back later, if you want them. If not, we will find jobs for all of you who can work."

The wariness vanished, hope shining through. Despite how weak they all looked, they made their way from the building at a quick pace, beyond relieved to be going somewhere with food and warmth. I didn't know whether to feel happy or sad about that.

"Beta King. Gamma Ashwell." I called.

"Yes Luna?" They both smiled at me, the first sincere smiles I'd received so far. They stood together with Jasper, talking quietly.

"I've been told there are more rooms in the packhouse than are needed. If you can, find some for you and your families tonight. Tomorrow..."

"Tomorrow?"

"You'll be handing out some eviction notices."

King raised his brows. "To whom, exactly?"

"I'll let you know tomorrow." I smirked.

The three of them gave me knowing looks. I had a plan forming, and it was sure to get messy. But I wasn't going to single out anyone for special treatment, especially those who opposed what was best for the pack as a whole. My stomach rumbled loudly, and then Jasper was at my side.

"Let's get you home. You need to eat something, and rest." He told me.

"Food does sound pretty good right now." I admitted.

We bid goodnight to King and Ashwell, holding hands as we exited the Hall. The meeting had taken longer than I thought; The sky was dark when we got outside, a few early stars peeking through the clouds. The wind was light, blowing my hair lazily around my shoulders. My mind though, felt like a beehive, with a bunch of questions and ideas. One question in particular made its way to the tip of my tongue.

"You think I'll be able to handle this, Jasper?"

"Being a Luna?"

"All of it. I'm grateful you included me in the reformation process, but...I'm scared I'll mess it up." I admitted softly.

"I have all the faith in the world for you Vie. Honestly, I thought we would do all of this together, but I don't want to put too much physical strain on you. We can handle the bigger, heavier stuff, like repairing homes. But that's still nothing, not compared to what you're going to do. You're going to be giving so many people jobs. Giving them a purpose again."

I frowned. "Be that as it may, you are the Alpha."

"And an Alpha is nothing without his Luna." He grinned at me.

"By that logic, how do explain Anne and Warrick?"

"Easy." He shrugged. "They were both selfish, greedy people. She contributed to his bad choices, and made countless ones of her own. They brought down this pack together."

I snorted. "I guess, looking at from that perspective."

"You and I are not selfish, or greedy. I'm assuming everything sitting in the foyer right now is being sold?"

"That was the plan. I'm going to put whatever money comes from it back into the pack, where it needs to go."

Jasper pulled me close on the sidewalk, leaning down a couple inches from my face.

"I guessed as much. You can do this Vie. We can, together. I know it's going to be a bumpy road, but there's nobody I'd rather have by my side through it. Stop doubting yourself."

I decided to admit my biggest worry. "And...my...issue?"

His eyes softened even more. He sighed. "You want to tell everyone?"

I bit my lip. "No... Not right now. But I don't want to keep secrets from the pack."

"I know. I don't either. But maybe right now isn't the best time."

I relaxed against him. "Agreed."

"I love you; you know."

"I love you too."

Our lips met for a brief, but fiery kiss.