

CHAPTER 125

Kai POV

Well, that was a bit of complete fuckery. Never could I have imagined finding Winter's mother so quickly, let alone that she hooked up with Johnathon's dad. Johnathon was pissed and quite frankly I couldn't blame him. Winter can defend her mother all that she likes, even she has to admit that what Elena did was wrong. In so many ways.

Now, I don't know what it is about Elena's mother but I instantly dislike her. It could be her abandonment of her children, but I think it's the way she avoids my gaze and how she dodges questions she doesn't want to answer. Or the way she fidgets as she answers, looking uncertain like she's guessed it. My skin crawls being near her. But Winter seems to be unaffected by her mother, rising to her defense regardless of everything. My god, even Damien senses something's off. He's not a fool, even if I reckon, he looks like one.

"How much longer until we reach the castle" comes Winter's voice, snapping me out of my thoughts. I glance down at the clock on the car and give a sigh.

"Hours yet" I say, looking over the scenery. "But wait until we get there" I say excited "the castle is something special to look at. Plus, King Axel is a really nice guy. Down to earth and kind. I haven't met his wife yet, so I can't really tell you about her. He's been kind of cooped up since his

marriage" I comment frowning "he used to like travelling to the different packs and meeting the Alpha's. Weird how marriage changes someone."

Winter shoots me an icy look. "Is that your way of saying you will not contemplate marriage?" she asked with a hiss and I gulp.

"That's not what I meant" I protest quietly "there was no offense meant."

She just grunts and sits back. Fantastic. Now I've managed to piss off my mate as well. It's going to be a very long trip. Nothing but silence from Winter who's staring out the window as I drive. I watch the scenery pass by in a scowl. Why can't I just learn to keep my mouth shut sometimes.

Seriously dude. You mentioned marriage in a derogatory term and didn't think she was going to take offense? Are you really this stupid?

Shut it, Kai. I wasn't meaning anything by it.

She's a girl. Girl's dream about being married. The white dress, the rings, the ceremony, the whole shebang and now she thinks you don't want to marry her. Smooth dude, real smooth. It's going to be your fault if she says no when you finally get the guts to propose to her.

I don't know if I'm ready to ask her yet. She still has this hybrid problem to deal with and it never seems to be the right time.

Hey, I don't care. Get with the program. I'll take over and ask her. She won't say no to me, I'm not the one she's pissed at. She can marry old stormy any old time.

Shut up Storm.

Your just jealous that our mate loves me more, admit it. Not my fault you're such a douchebag.

Stupid mutt. He really knows how to push my buttons. I cast a sideways look at Winter. She's slumped against the window, blinking furiously. Had I made her cry? God I'm an asshole. I clear my throat.

"Winter I wasn't saying I would never get married" I say firmly "just that I wasn't thinking about it right now."

She nods but says nothing. Sigh.

Thankfully the gate looms up and several guards swarm the vehicle, pointing their guns at us. Winter looks nervous as hell but this was to be expected. I merely wind my window down and smile at the guards.

"Name and purpose of your visit" one says abruptly, frowning at me.

I shrug. Can't make friends with everyone. "My name is Alpha Kai" I say slowly "and I'm here to visit King Axel, an old friend of mine."

His eyes go cloudy and I know that he's mind-linking the King. It's just a matter of time now. We sit patiently waiting. The guards never let their guns go down. I'm impressed. They are acting exactly like they should be, none of them letting their guards down at all. Nor have they moved a single inch. Winter looks at me in concern but I just wink at her, to show her that everything is alright. I've done this numerous times before, just not with her.

"You said Alpha Kai, didn't you?" the guard checks and I nod. His eyes go back to normal and he signals to his comrades to loosen their weapons.

"King Axel is expecting you in the throne room" he tells me "Do you know where it is?"

I give a grin. "I know it, but shouldn't you guys be escorting me in?" Now I'm confused. Has King Axel gone a bit soft on his protocols. I've never been inside the castle without several guards escorting me in.

The guard shakes his head. "King Axel says you don't need to be escorted and I take my orders from him" he says calmly. He motions towards the others. "Fallout" he booms and they begin to walk away. I shake my head in surprise and put the car into drive. Winter looks relieved and a bit more relaxed. We drive forward, up the long driveway and park in front of the massive grey castle as Winter's mouth falls open in awe.

"It's so beautiful" she gushes, hopping out of the car and turning around to see as much of it as she can. "It's huge" she comments.

I give her a wicked grin "wait until you see the inside then" I point out "it's just as gorgeous as the outside, maybe more so."

We wander through the entrance, past the guards who wave us through, clearly expecting us. Communication is awesome between these guards. Winter's mouth falls open as we walk past artwork, intricate furniture and royal looking curtains.

"Wow" she utters.

I laugh. We walk towards the throne room and stop at the doors, two guards standing at attention. "I'm Alpha Kai and this is Winter" I say introducing her "I believe King Axel is expecting us."

Their eyes cloud over and then they nod, opening the doors and ushering us through. Winter thanks them quietly.

The throne room is large and elegant, a red rug running all the way to the throne chairs. We walk down, King Axel on his chair, smiling widely at the both of us. I frown. He seems to have aged somewhat since I last saw

him. His black hair now contained silver tips and his eyes had wide dark circles beneath them. His green eyes were dull rather than sparkling and his short beard was thick and rather messy instead of well-groomed like it normally was. He was dressed in black pants and white shirt; his normal uniform and he waved with slightly trembling hands. It was like he'd aged ten years or more since I'd last seen him less than two years ago.

"Welcome" King Axel declared jovially, standing up and rushing forward to shake my hand, his eyes lighting up. "It's been a very long time, hasn't it Alpha Kai? I can't remember the last time you came for a visit" he admonished.

"It's been too long" I agree before turning to Winter who is uncomfortably shifting her weight from one foot to another "this is my mate Winter" I said and he gave her a kindly smile.

"Winter, what a beautiful name, for a beautiful woman" he complimented her.

He keeps this shit up, I'm gonna knock him down to the ground. He's hitting on our woman.

No, he's not Storm, he's being polite

If we're not careful, she'll prefer him to us. We need to make a grand statement. Propose damn it.

No, she won't, you are being paranoid.

Throw a ring at her.

No. Stop being an idiot!

King Axel politely shook Winter's hand as she beamed up at him, completely charmed. I frown. Maybe Storm had a point.

"It's a pleasure to meet you" Winter says shyly.

"You must meet my wife" King Axel says with a chuckle "she's out for the moment but will be back for supper. She loves to meet my old friends. You haven't met her yet, have you?" he says frowning, as though trying to remember.

I shake my head. "Actually, your wife is the reason that we are both here" I say politely "I have heard that she is a strong witch? One of the strongest in the country?"

"Well yes, she is" King Axel tells me proudly "no other witch can compare to her. But, tell me, why is it that you require a witch?"

I look over at Winter. "My mate was turned into a hybrid against her will. Now she's half vampire, half shifter. We were hoping that your wife, would be able to take the vampire part out of her."

King Axel looks at Winter Sadly. "You poor thing" he exclaims "to have that done to you. Is the person responsible dead? For I can send my men out right now to look for them."

"They are dead" Winter assures him "but thank you for the offer."

"Hmmm, taking part of you out like that" King Axel murmurs thoughtfully "I'm not sure if it can be done. But if anyone can do it, my wife would be the one to come to. We must ask her at dinner."

"What is your wife's name?" I ask out of curiosity.

"Her name is Vanessa. I met her. . ." he trails off looking puzzled "well I'm not quite sure where I met her. I assume it must have been on one of my travels though" he said decidedly "and we decided to get married straight away. We both knew we wanted to be with each other forever, so

it made sense and we've been happy since. It's been just over a year, if I remember correctly."

I'm a little puzzled. How do you not remember how you met someone? Especially when it was just over a year ago? I peer closer at my old friend. Is it possible that he's struggling with dementia? Can werewolves even get dementia? I've not heard of it happening to a shifter before.

"Congratulations on your marriage" Winter tells him sincerely "I'm sure it was beautiful."

He frowns. "Well yes, it was. But it was a small one. We felt it better to elope rather than have the large traditional wedding. So much more intimate" he mutters "but I do wish my parents could have been there. I've not seen them since I met Vanessa. They refuse to have anything to do with me."

He shakes his head and then sighs. "Well let's organize your accommodation and set up a time for supper. I can't wait for my wife to meet you. She'll be overjoyed" he babbled, leading them out of the throne room with large strides "she's always happy to meet my friends. So, few visit me these days" he added with a frown "I suppose they are all busy with their own mates and wives. I must travel again one day, when Vanessa is up to coming with me. See how everyone is getting along."

I stare at him. He sounds so strange. Not like himself at all. I knew he'd be changed slightly once he had a wife, but this was a significant change.

He thrusts open the doors to a bedroom and motions us inside. "This will be your room for the night. Let's do supper at 7pm tonight" he says hurriedly, running a hand through his hair "I must go and do something."

He tears out the door before I can say anything.

"Well, that was weird" comments Winter, frowning and looking out the door.

"You don't know the half of it" I mutter. I was curious to see this Vanessa at suppertime and how she acted towards her husband. Something was off. I could sense it.