

CHAPTER 137

Kai POV

I feel frustrated. Every time I try to go to Winter, Vanessa somehow makes me forget that's what I want to do and I find myself doing her bidding instead. Lunch was spent at the table, learning about Drake who seems to be slightly uncomfortable in his mother's presence. He certainly doesn't act like a loving son at any rate, but I could be reading him wrong. It's hard to say. My friend King Axel is also silent, staring down at his food, his eyes glazed over. He hasn't uttered a word, Vanessa instead doing the majority of the talking. The same thing happens at dinner, and I push my food around on my plate, not hungry, my stomach churning nervously as the sky begins to darken. My gut begins to cramp in response.

Drake too, looks out the window. He seems to be contemplating something but it's hard to say what. The room is full of tension.

"It's almost time" Vanessa says in a husky voice "for the ritual. Winter will finally be free of her vampire side" she says, turning to me and staring deeply into my eyes. I feel my body becoming loose and relaxed, my mind free of everything but what she is telling me. Drake lets out a snort and she shoots him an angry glance. I know she didn't want him to come down here, she'd told him bluntly it wasn't the right time but he'd showed no caring about that at all. He'd actually been quite snide about it, but Axel had been delighted to see him, much like a father seeing his son. It had been touching to see. At least someone seemed to care about the boy. It was a shame he hadn't ended up with a better mother.

Vanessa glances outside with a gleam in her eyes. She turns to her husband who blinks at her confused, an absent expression on his face. "Axel" she says brusquely "go to our room. You are no good to me right now. You can't help with the ritual" she explains, a sly expression on her face.

For a moment, there's a look of disappointment on Axel's face, but just as quickly it fades away as he stands up and bows to his wife, who watches him keenly. "As you wish my queen" he says monotonously.

He turns and walks away with slow, steady footsteps, the sound fading into the distance.

Drake watches him go with a brooding expression on his face. He looks upset on Axel's behalf. His mother merely raises an eyebrow at him. He stays silent. She smirks.

"I must fetch a few things from my chamber" she informs me haughtily as I listen, my feet not moving as my body remains still "stay here with Drake while I do so."

"As you wish" I say automatically and she smirks.

Vanessa or rather, Queen Vanessa, turns and glides out of the dining room, a look of concentration on her heavily made-up face. Drake gives her the finger behind her back, luckily, she doesn't turn around and see it. Loving son, he is not coming across as. I turn to look at him, my head at least able to turn. I wonder if I should be anxious about that. Nah. I'm good.

Drake frowns at me. Smack. He raises his hand and slaps me directly across the face, causing me to stumble backwards.

"Ouch" I snarl and he looks at me repentant. Well sort of anyway. It quickly fades. Bastard.

"Sorry" he whispers "but pain seems to be the only thing that breaks my mother's spell. You should be able to move now" he added.

I move my foot experimentally and gasp. He's right, I can.

I give him a sidelong look "did you go to the dungeon?" I hiss and he nods, his face pale.

"I did and I met my brother Damien" he advises "they are still in there, but I plan to leave in a minute and free them. You on the other hand" he whispers frantically "need to do everything my mother tells you to. Not that you'll be able to do otherwise, the second she's back here, you'll be under her spell."

"Then why aren't you?" I snap and he gives a bitter laugh.

"I guess because I've grown up with her. I'm immune."

"What is she?" I ask anxiously "how does she have so much power over me?"

He looks incredulous, as though surprised I haven't worked it out yet. Now I feel stupid for no damn good reason.

"She's half siren" he whispers, checking the doorway "no man can resist her. Did you honestly think your friend chose her as mate" he says and I still.

"Oh my god, no wonder" I murmur feeling sick and somewhat angry as I stare at the boy "why haven't you stopped her?" I ask and he looks at me grimly.

"Because she's still my mother. Not to mention she would see it coming, it's no secret that I can't stand her" he adds.

We hear the sounds of footsteps coming and he motions at me frantically to get back into the position I had been in when she left. I hurriedly oblige and she comes waltzing in, clutching several items to her breasts which she hands over to a very apologetic looking Drake.

"Drake my dear" she purrs, thrusting her breasts out as her son winces and looks away embarrassed "would you do me a massive favor and take this out to my altar table outdoors" she says, grasping his arm and looking into his eyes, even as he tries to evade her. "Kai and I have one more thing to grab before we can begin. You don't mind, do you?" she asks.

Drake's eyes meet mine and I know he's going to the dungeon now he's been given the opportunity. I give a discreet nod and he smiles a little at her. She visibly relaxes.

"Thankyou" Vanessa tells Drake warmly as he gives a grunt and a nod, starting out of the room with his hands full of items "we'll see you out there" she adds with a grin.

I eye her as he leaves. She seems so confident, so sure of herself. I can feel the siren part of her calling to me, doing my best to resist it, but it proves to be futile. My whole body seems to be floating again and I don't feel anything like myself. God, I'm useless, I think annoyed as she runs her hand up my arm.

"Kai my darling" she says sweetly, tingles spreading up my body "I think it's time to fetch Winter now, don't you? We need her, after all, for the ritual."

I nod and she leads me out of the room and throughout the castle, until we reach the bedroom that Winter and I have been staying at.

She pushes the door open and walks inside, gesturing for me to follow. My steps feel leaden as I come to the side of the bed, staring down at my mate with confusion. She lies there, snoring softly away, her body curled up in a fetal position. She looks so innocent and so vulnerable. I once again try to resist the spell, but cannot break its hold on me. Vanessa's eyes gleam with satisfaction as she eyes my mate on the bed, who appears not to be aware of either of our presences.

"Pick her up Kai, but gently please" Vanessa instructs me in a husky voice, pointing down at Winter.

Damn her to hell, I think sourly. My body moves to respond to her direction though, my arms scooping Winter up and holding her cradled to my chest. Her head lays back limply and her arms and legs swing back and forth in my grasp.

"Follow me" Vanessa says lightly, gleefully leaving the room.

We head through a variety of winding corridors and out of the castle, heading southwards on the grounds. Something large and shimmery is in the distance, gleaming in the moonlight. I can't make it out, but it appears to be what she's aiming for, her body striding purposely towards it, smiling in the moonlight. Winter's body feels light in my arms, as light as a feather, her body cold against my bare skin. We continue in the direction and my eyes make out what the large item is. It's a large table of sorts, I suppose you could call it. But it was made of white stone or marble or something like that. Long and rectangular, it's the perfect size for a person to lie down upon.

Vanessa nods as she spots the various items, she'd given Drake piled haphazardly next to it. "Damn that boy" she swears. glancing around with annoyance on her face "where on earth has he gotten to now? He never did have the stomach for my spells" she said with a derisive snort. She motions for me to put Winter down on the table.

I gently place her down, her face staring up at the moonlit sky, her arms and legs by her sides. Vanessa leans down and retrieves something else I didn't see and I blanch as she waves the chains around. "Tie her to the table."

Resist, damn it, I think to myself, but already I've grabbed the chains and wound them around her and the table. She pushes a padlock at me and I lock it, stepping back and looking at my mate gravely. Why does she

resemble a sacrifice to me? It makes me nervous but I still don't move towards her.

The moon is high in the sky now, stars twinkling overhead. There was a slight chill to the air and part of me wonders how it is that Vanessa is so unaffected by it, clad in a simple short black dress that clings firmly to her figure. She tests the chains and beams at me. "Nice and tight" she approves "well done my soon to be King."

I feel dread at that promise. I don't want to be her king. I just want to be Winter's mate and even that was at risk right now, considering everything I've done. Why aren't I completely under her spell? Because my thoughts are my own, I notice with surprise. Is it because Drake slapped me? Or because I can't stop thinking about my mate in between Vanessa's talking?

She begins to light some candles, placing them in a large circle around the table, the flames, lighting on their own. Not only that, but they do not flicker or fizzle out despite the chilly air and brisk wind. They don't topple over either, standing firmly on the grass. She also makes me stand back so that I'm not inside the circle.

"Done" she mutters to herself, standing back and eying it critically.

I dart my eyes around. Where the fuck was Drake? He had said he was going to the dungeon so where was he? Surely it didn't take that long to free a few lousy prisoners? If he didn't hurry this ritual was going to be done and dusted and there was nothing, I could do to prevent it. My body was refusing to move unless she told me to.

"A few more minutes" Vanessa said quietly, spreading out her arms and swaying back and forth "and then I will have what I desire most" she exclaims.

Her gaze drops to Winter and she smirks "so much for being a powerful hybrid" Vanessa says snidely "she's the weakest one I've ever come across.

She has all this power at her fingertips" she says unrepentantly "and doesn't use it. What a waste. She doesn't deserve it. She doesn't want it. So, I'm going to take it and so much more. I will finally have everything I finally wanted. What I deserve" she laughs quietly, as I stare at her in dismay. She sounds crazed, but then, wasn't she crazy? I couldn't keep up with the way her emotions kept changing so quickly.

She bends down and grabs a chalice and a small dagger. Vanessa hands the chalice to me and my hand closes around it automatically, holding it steady in front of me. She aims the small dagger with a white crystal handle, at her forearm and closes her eyes, preparing herself to draw blood, from what I can determine.

Suddenly we hear a loud shout and my eyes fly open in relief. "Get the fuck away from my daughter, you bitch."