

CHAPTER 138

Damien POV

We spent ages waiting for Vanessa to start her fucking ritual thing, that poor boy Jared still locked up in that cell we left him in. We couldn't risk being caught in the castle and stuck to the grounds, spotting Winter being carried out and Kai carrying her once it became dark. Drake was annoyed, finding us and scolding us for not waiting but he shut up when I glared at him. He did however, leave us briefly to go and let Jared out of the cell and I respect him for that. Clearly the two of them are close friends. He's loyal, a nice characteristic to have.

We duck behind some bushes nearby, watching as Vanessa instructs Kai to place Winter down on the stone slab, restraining her with chains around the table. Kai is moving but it's mechanical, his movements jerky as though he's trying to resist.

"It's the siren part of her" mother whispers "Kai's clearly under her spell." Well duh.

Drake joins us. I cast a look at him.

"Have any of you thought of a plan?" he asks rather desperately as we all shake our heads at him.

"Well, that's just great" he huffs.

Langdon seems concerned, narrowing his eyes. "She's about to draw blood" he murmurs "now might be a good time to interrupt her."

I open my mouth to answer but Mother has already stood up and strode around, staring a startled Vanessa in the face as she shouts out loud "get away from my daughter you bitch."

"So much for that" mutters Drake, getting up and walking around, Langdon and I following. Elena has given away that we've escaped from the dungeon, even if she didn't mean to, so there was no longer any point in hiding. I could kill her though, for losing control, even if it's out of fear for her daughter.

Queen Vanessa is beautiful, her hair flowing in the wind. Her eyes are eerily bright as she smiles in welcome at us, the dagger slowly dropping to point at the ground. "Well, isn't this a nice Surprise" she trills her voice lilting in the air. "So many nice visitors" she adds.

I frown. Why can't I move? I try to step away but can't. Judging by the looks on everyone's faces, including Elena's, they can't as well. Vanessa moves closer, her eyes narrowed on me in particular, a small smirk on her face.

"Well Drake how coincidence that your twin happens to be here as well" she scoffs touching my face as I flinch. She grins.

A few more steps and she stops directly in front of a frozen Drake, his eyes glaring at his mother angrily as she sighs and shakes her head, tsking in disappointment.

"I expected more from you, my son. Where is the loyalty to your mother?" she says sadly, a hand clutched to her chest.

"You're not my mother" he spits out "You've never been my mother. I'm just a trophy for you to parade around. You don't care about me" he growls "you just needed me to help you lure in certain men."

Vanessa gives a large sigh and then turns to my mother, a sadistic smile on her face.

"Here is your so-called real mother" Vanessa drawls, as Elena tries to raise her hand to her. She catches it and digs her nails in, causing Elena to yelp in pain. Drake goes pale. His eyes are horrified. He glances over at me and I stare back, feeling just as helpless.

"It's been a long time Elena, hasn't it" Vanessa continues and my mouth drops open.

What did she just say? It wasn't my imagination; she just called my mother by her first name. Which means the two of them knew each other.

"Screw you Vanessa" hisses Elena. She groans as Vanessa drops her arm. I can see nail indents on her from where I stand. There's also a slight bit of blood welling up.

"So rude" says Vanessa annoyed, walking back to Kai and placing a hand on his chest as he stares at her like a lovestruck puppy dog.

"After all I did for you" she snaps, as Elena rolls her eyes.

"What do you mean?" I force out.

Vanessa gives me a coy look. "Did your mother not tell you how you were conceived?" she asks wickedly.

I'm confused. She laughs. Elena turns her head to face me. "Don't listen to her" she pleads.

I ignore my mother. Drake is also staring intently at her. "Tell me" I growl.

Vanessa shrugs. "Well, your mother knew me when we both attended school together" she said with a disgusted glance at a distraught looking Elena "we were friends, despite the fact I wasn't a shifter. When she met your father" she told me, raising her eyes, contempt on her face "she found

out that she was unable to bear children. A rare oddity in a shifter, but it does happen" she says with a pitying look at me. "So, she came to me. Your father, it turns out, was desperate for an heir back then and Elena was desperate to give him one. The timing worked out well. I willingly agreed to cast a spell on her in order for her to conceive but with an ultimatum. You see" she sighed "I too wanted a son to love, to adore. My kind find it extremely difficult to bear children as well and the spell would ensure she had twins."

"Myself and Drake" I uttered out, casting a scornful look at my mother. She'd lied to me, yet again. Why was I so surprised?

"Yes" said Vanessa sweetly "your mother had to give up one of you to me and she did so without any qualms at all. Your father went along, because I gave them a substantial amount of money in return as well. Imagine my surprise when your mother came back, wanting a daughter to go along with the son she had. Very little time had passed at all, but she wanted to have the two of you close together" she explained.

My eyes dart to mother. Langdon is calm, placid, even frozen as he is, feet stuck to the ground. I can tell he's taking everything in.

"Does that mean she had twins again?" I ask, fearing the answer.

Was there another Winter out there somewhere?

Vanessa shook her head. "No, it would have killed your mother if I had used the same spell. This time she would get one daughter only and be happy with that. Another spell would kill her. I did it for her, in good faith and then she forgot about me like I never existed."

Her tone was bitter, I noticed, like she'd been hurt by mother's lack of friendship.

Elena was indignant. "I was busy being beaten half to death" she snapped.

Vanessa rolled her eyes "I told you to leave him" she hissed "over and over again but you didn't listen and then you finally did, leaving your children behind. You're a disgraceful human being" she told her.

I could agree with that. Even Drake was eyeing Elena with misgiving and he barely knew her.

"Vanessa, I'm begging you don't do this" Elena pleaded, looking down at Winter "you have a choice."

Vanessa laughed.

Her face was incredulous. "You want me to stop this ritual?" she asked with a laugh "you must be kidding. I don't care if she is your precious daughter, she has something that I want. Or rather, she has two things that I desire."

Winter was so still but her hair, her hair was slowly changing color in front of me. I blinked but was certain it was turning an extremely light blonde. Vanessa was so busy speaking, she wasn't noticing that at all. I kept my face blank, not wanting to draw attention to that. Something was clearly going on. I was praying it was for the good and that it might be a case of her waking up. Langdon too, cast a sideways glance before looking back up. He'd noticed as well.

"What is it you want?" I asked rather desperately.

Part of me was desperately hoping that Kai would get his act together but he seemed to be blinking and glancing around like he was completely at a loss. I suppose, having been in Vanessa's presence longer, he was more susceptible to her wiles? Did it work that way?

Vanessa turned to look at me, her eyes glinting in the moonlight. Her lips curved back.

"What do I want" she repeated with amusement. "Well, I want lots of things. But right now," she said delightedly "I want the power that Winter possesses as a hybrid. Taking her Vampire side will make me a tri-brid, something that's not been done before."

"Then you'll leave her alone?" I check.

"No. She also has the baby she's conceived under my spell. I want that baby. It will be transferred into my own body to grow and develop. I've always wanted to experience pregnancy and this is my chance to."

I stare at her with hatred. She's so evil. Elena lets out a choking sound. Vanessa glances at her.

"What's wrong Elena? Are you upset about me killing your daughter? Because once I'm done, Winter will be nothing but an empty shell and I'll be the most powerful species in existence. Not to mention, her mate, will be my king and rule by my side. He's rather handsome or I happen to think so anyway."

"What about the king" asked Langdon.

"I plan on killing him too" Vanessa snarled "a more boring shifter, I have never met. I want his kingdom, not him. He will go, just as all of you will."

Something was spreading on Winter's forearm. It looks like a mark of some description. Or tattoo. It's tribal and it's dark. It seems to shimmer for a moment and then stills. How curious. Elena is spitting vile curses at Vanessa who is merely laughing as she walks back over to Kai and draws her arm back up, the dagger shining brightly as she tenses her arm and gets ready to pull it across and draw blood.

"With this blood" spits out Vanessa, dragging the dagger across her arm and causing blood to trickle. Kai hands her a goblet. "I will force Winter to drink it, mixed with some herbs" she added, bending and grabbing a

small container, shaking it and trickling it in. "It will purge her vampire side out and it will come to me. It will be all mine."

I try to force my body to propel forward. I'm shaking from trying so hard and I can see the others doing the same, Drake in particular grunting and swearing as he tries.

"Mother don't" Drake shouts as she stares at him "enough of this evil. Stop while you still can" he growls.

She raises an eyebrow and shakes her head. "Sorry Drake but I know you. You've sided with my enemies and I can't forgive that. If it's any consolation to you" she says quietly "I will make your death a painless one, I promise. You deserve that at least."

He looks like he's been struck across the face before it hardens as he stares at his mother. She looks unrepentant. I grit my teeth and feel the tiniest bit of movement.

Kai sways slightly on his feet. He's trying to move; I can sense it. Vanessa still remains oblivious, too busy gloating over what she's about to do. Winter's arm moves, twitches slightly. I see Vanessa move towards her, the goblet firmly held in both hands, the smell of the herbs disgusting and pungent, strong in the air as we gag. She stops and looks down at Winter, cocking her head.

"Such a weakling. What a shame you didn't embrace it" she tells her.

How does she not notice Winter's hair changed?

She lifts the goblet up and prepares to put it to Winter's lips. To everyone's shock, Winter's arm swings up and grabs Vanessa's hand, gripping it tightly as the woman squealed, her eyes fluttering open.

"Think again bitch" Winter snarls, her eyes glowing red "I'm going to kill you."