

CHAPTER 141

Kai POV

Drip, drip, drip. The sound is incessant, bloody annoying and I open my eyes, my mouth widening in shock as I scream at the fact that it's like I'm underwater, feeling the water on my body, but unable to tell which way is up or down because it's so damn dark. My arms flail around, my body moves every which way, in a frantic attempt to get some air, certain that I'll die if I don't get some oxygen into my lungs. It takes several minutes, before I calm down enough to notice that, despite the fact I'm underwater and floating around, I'm not drowning and my body doesn't appear to need air. What the hell is going on?

The last thing that I remember is something hard and heavy hitting me right on the head. Not Winter, but a rock, branch, tree limb? All I know is it hit me hard, and fast, before I could dodge it. I remember Winter's frantic screams, over and over again, while I was unable to open my eyes, or do anything. She was so hysterical, it had killed me to listen. Someone had finally held her back, her touch suddenly gone, my body feeling so cold, like it would never be warm again. My heart suddenly skips a beat as a realization dawn on me. Have I died? My god, no, I couldn't have. But Storm is quiet, and no matter how hard I try to reach my wolf, there's no answer. I feel like there's a part of me missing, like Storm has been wrenched out of me. It's disquieting. But if I'm dead, then where am I? Is this hell?

I hear a sudden sucking sound, and then without warning the water begins to slowly push down, until my body is lying there, a small puddle beneath me, feeling like I'm in quicksand, it's that hard to move myself into a sitting position. I rub my hand over my eyes and blink, but it's still dark, my eyesight seeming to be like a normal human being, rather than as a shifter, and I awkwardly get to my feet, stumbling slightly. My body is cold, shivering violently as I glance in every direction, but all there is, is an empty landscape, no grass, no trees, no clouds, no sky. Nothing but blackness all around me.

"Hello" I shout, "anyone there?"

No answer. I huff and contemplate my situation. In the end I decide to start walking, in a random direction, in the hopes I come across something, anything that will tell me where I am. I need to get back to Winter, she's waiting for me. I won't let her think I abandoned her. If I have to claw my way out of her, I will. My feet move with purpose, my stride never faltering. Hours pass and I begin to despair, thinking I really am in hell. Why else would it be so dark and so cold with nothing in sight?

Just as I'm beginning to think of giving up, light appears up ahead. Like a strobe light from a play, in the distance. I squint at it and then begin to walk a little faster, feeling myself get a second wind. Whatever that light was, I wanted to know where it was coming from. I jog, lightly, and the closer I get, the more light there is, until I find myself blinking against what seems to be harsh sunlight, my hand over my eyes. I turn around in bewilderment, suddenly finding my feet are standing on ground and grass, blue sky overhead and millions of flowers spread across the ground for the eye to see. A lake is off to the side and a swing hanging from a tree. Wait. Is that a person on the swing?

I walk slowly towards the small dainty figure, her features coming into focus as I approach, her hair silvery in the sunlight, her skin pale, her eyes the clearest and brightest blue. There's a knowing look on her face as she

halts the swing, her bare feet barely touching the floor. I gulp. She doesn't appear to be a human, but rather something else, emitting a dangerous and powerful aura. I stop where I am as she slowly gets to her feet and then glares at me, as though personally affronted by something I've done to her.

"You" she shouts incensed as I jump and then stare "how dare you."

She has to be talking to me, right? I glance around but there's no one there. Yep, just me. She strides right up to me and points her finger in my chest, breathing rapidly in her anger.

"You idiot" she howls.

Now that's a bit much. I don't even know this woman but she shoots me such a scathing look, that I wisely decide to keep my mouth shut.

"It's not your time. You, you" she splutters, hands now on her hips "are not meant to be here. You are meant to be with her!" she exclaims with a snarl. "You nincompoop" she growls.

My mouth falls open as she turns and storms away, glancing over her shoulder, shouting at me "follow me dumbass."

I follow. It's not like I know where I am but what is this woman's problem? She finally stops at the foot of the lake, where I now notice a big black, familiar, wolf, resting under the tree.

"Storm" I cry and go to walk towards him when she flings her arm out and prevents me.

"Stop, he's resting right now. You will not ruin his recovery" she snorts "or I'll kill you."

I notice a small vial next to Storm, shimmering with red blood. It's so bright in the sunlight and I feel myself drawn to it, like it's beckoning me.

"Can you tell me where I am" I snap at the woman, angry now.

"Don't get rude with me" she says and then relaxes, gesturing around her. "This is the space between" she murmurs, biting her lip "where all people go before they die."

I really don't like the sound of that. "Am I dead?" I ask "who are you?"

She looks offended. "Haven't you figured that out? I'm the moon goddess" she says icily "and I am none too happy with you Alpha Kai."

I gulp. Fuck. The moon goddess is pissed at me. Really pissed. If looks could kill, I'd be nothing but ashes in the wind by now.

"I'm sorry" I apologize, not knowing what else to do.

She sighs. "You fool. How could you let down your guard like that and let yourself be hit" she demanded.

"I didn't want Winter to go so far she'd hate herself. I thought that Vanessa was weakened. I was stupid, I know that" I tell her firmly.

"Well, it was a dumb thing to do" she grumbles "now I have to do something about you."

Uh oh. "Like what?" I ask her nervously, trying not to give rise to my panic.

"Well, I can either let you die, or I can offer you something to keep you alive" she said quietly "but it requires a sacrifice as all things do. The thing is, you've not done the greatest job at being a mate to Winter" she points out seething "and I would require you to do much, much better."

"I could beg you not to end my life, but in the end the decision is up to you" I say evenly, my heart hammering in my chest "but I will say this. I know I've been crap to Winter, my god, I feel like the worst human being in the world sometimes. I hate myself at times. But I have never stopped

loving her. She's my everything. The reason that I want to keep going every day, when part of me wants to just sink into a depression that's hard to get out of. She's the reason I've found a reason to smile again. She's taught me what love, real love feels like. She's shown me what it's like to be affectionate and what it's like to crave a person so badly, you'll go to any lengths to do what they want or need. Winter is my reason for living; she makes me stronger and more compassionate as a human being. I've changed, maybe not enough, but some and I don't want Winter to ever think that I left her, or stopped caring. If you kill me, then all I ask is that you give her a mate, that loves and adores her as much as I do, and who shows her the love that she deserves."

I see a slight smile of encouragement on the moon goddess's face. But it doesn't matter, because all I can see in my mind's eye is my precious Winter. I feel a pang at the thought that I may have to leave her, but if she can find some happiness with another person, then I can find some small consolation in that. My heart is breaking and all I feel is agony, stuck in the depths of my own despair. If I'm honest with myself, I don't want Winter to find someone else. No one is going to love her like I do; no one will understand her like I do. I stare straight at a quiet and serious moon goddess.

"I take it back" I state, my eyes turning black "Winter is my mate and will stay my mate. No one loves her like I do. No one cares for her Like I do. She's always been mine and she always will be" I declare, my heart skipping a beat. The moon goddess is silent, awed in fact.

"That's all very well but are you willing to make a sacrifice" she says with a sidelong glance.

"Name it, I'll make whatever sacrifice I have to" I growl "anything, if it means going back to her."

She nods, pleased. She takes my hand and shivers run up my spine as I feel the full magnitude of her power, tugging me over to where Storm rests and the vial sits, glinting in the sunlight.

"Blood" she says, pointing to it "to be specific it's Winter's blood. You drank some earlier but not enough for the transition to take place."

I frown. Transition? Into what? Horror then shock. She means into a hybrid. I glance back down at the vial, my heart hammering now. I have a feeling I know what the sacrifice is.

The moon goddess bends down, her white dress sweeping across the grass and grabs ahold of the vial, ignoring the sleeping, Storm. She balances it on the palm of her hand. "If You drink this, you will live" she says softly "but you will also become a hybrid, like Winter is. Unlike her, the transition will happen immediately and without any hiccups." A pause "you'll be able to control your urges but you will need to feed every so often as Winter does. You'll be exactly like her and Kai" she says sternly "there is no cure. Witches cannot take the vampire part out of you or Winter. Are you willing to go through with this? To live as a hybrid? Or shall Winter find love with another mate?"

There's no malice in her tone, but I stiffen at the mention of Winter and another mate. I regard the vial silently and reach out to take it. The glass is smooth, cold, tiny in the grip of my own hand. She waits, her eyes wide, for me to do it and without a word, I open the stopper and drink it down in one quick rush, the blood sweet and tart. I drop the vial to the ground with a clatter.

"You love her, don't you" said the moon goddess with approval "and she loves you. I can hear the grief and the pain she's emitting from thinking she's lost you forever. She needs you Kai and you need her. Start showing her how much because she needs it. It's not enough to speak it. Actions sometimes can speak louder than words" she said.

I watch her bend down to pat Storm. She stands up and then glares. "Well," she says with a flourish of her hands "hurry up and wake up already" she snaps. I feel myself start to fall, and then, gasping for air, I sit upright, a hand to my chest, blinking at the bright light as I suddenly come to in a part of the hospital I never would have imagined. The moon goddess had a lot to answer for, I thought a bit acidly, or she had a wicked sense of humor, because I'd woken up in none other than the morgue! I blink and then hear the sound of a scream, a woman running towards the door, as though her life depends on it. Great, I think sardonically, this was going to be a little difficult to explain and all I want is to see Winter. Thanks a lot moon goddess.