

CHAPTER 157

Jonathan POV

She's so beautiful. It's the thought that constantly crashes through my mind during the drive back to the pack, Willow, my mate, in the passenger side, trembling all over. She's covered in bruises, all over, with needle marks in her arms, her eyes still welling with tears. My heart hurts to see my mate like this, my possessive side coming out. It's exactly what I felt with Winter, but this time I was embracing the mate bond, wanting to have a relationship with her, but with what she's gone through is she going to want to have anything to do with me?

I glance over at her. Her lip is trembling and she's staring pensively out the window, her body as far away from me as possible as she shrinks herself over towards the door. Besides the word 'mate' and telling me her name 'Willow', she's not really uttered much more. She did want to go to my pack however, when I suggested it, not discussing where her pack was when I asked.

"Willow" I say gently, "are you alright? Do you need me to stop? To pull over?" I was desperate to hear her voice again, the sweetness of it.

She shakes her head, her eyes looking at me anxiously. "No."

Well at least I got something out of her, I thought to myself drily.

"I know you must be scared" I say evenly, concentrating on the driving, feeling sleepy but energized with my mate beside me, "but if you want to talk, I will listen to you. I want to help you" I offer "we're mates after all."

"Mates" she repeats slowly "but aren't you going to reject me?" she asks incredulous "I'm hardly Luna material after all; you could do so much better" she says sadly.

I hate to hear her put herself down so bad. "Don't ever talk about yourself like that. You're beautiful" I say honestly, glancing at her stunning raven black hair and those clear blue eyes of hers.

"I'm average" she says dully "I think you need glasses."

I pull over with a screech, the cars behind me doing the same as I mind-link everyone to wait. She stares at me, apprehensive, wondering what I'm about to do.

"I think you're the most beautiful girl I've ever seen" I tell her firmly, pulling off my seatbelt as she cringes "you have the sweetest most musical voice, you have the prettiest pink lips, the gorgeous pale skin and hair that I just want to touch and stroke all over."

Her eyes widen in disbelief as she listens to my voice.

"But doesn't it bother you" she utters and I cock my head, wondering what she means. What on earth could possibly bother me?

I think she's the most courageous woman for going through what she did. I could only imagine the horrors she must have faced, what she had to endure. The tests she went through. All alone, with no one to get her through, besides the other prisoners.

"Does what bother me?" I ask, narrowing my eyes.

She gulps and then looks away, her voice weak now "that I'm an omega" she finally murmurs.

My jaw drops open. I hadn't even thought about something like that, nor did I care. If anything, my rejecting Winter had shown me to be more

compassionate towards others, and to not care about the hierarchy that was prevalent in packs.

I take her hand. She stiffens but doesn't yank it away. Tingles run up my spine. "It doesn't bother me in the slightest" I tell her warmly. She looks stunned at the admission, but I mean it. I don't care at all. She could be a normal human and I would still want her.

"You mean it" she stammers "you don't care that I'm an omega."

I shake my head and smile at her, watching her pink lips curve into a smile of their own. Her blue eyes are blinking back tears now and beginning to sparkle as she realizes that I don't want to reject her.

"I'm sorry" she apologizes huskily "it's just in my pack omegas are nothing more than servants that have to obey every single command in the pack. Even ones we don't want to" she says darkly.

I shudder at the thought and then realization dawns. Oh god, did she have to. . .

She looks away, embarrassed. "I'm afraid I was caught running away from my pack by the hunters, before I had to do something like that" she says, cheeks blushing.

My stomach stops churning and my anger fades slightly. Still, I want to know what kind of pack would require that of its omegas, for to me it was nothing more than akin to rape.

"What's the name of your pack?" I ask calmly and she stiffens, glancing over at me.

"The Red Blood Pack" she says quietly "you might not have heard of them. They tend to keep to themselves so that elders don't interfere. I was lucky to escape; most girls get caught before they can cross the boundary." She shudders, "and they're never seen again."

I was so angry. I hadn't heard of this pack before and I wondered just how far away they were from my own. How far had Willow travelled in order to escape before she got caught?

Willow was looking a bit pale and sickly now. I decided not to question her, for it would only bring up more terrible memories for her.

"Forgive me" I tell her quietly "I didn't mean to upset you."

She blinks at me and then visibly relaxes. She's no longer shrinking against the passenger door of the car, I notice with some relief, but rather sitting closer to me in the driver's seat.

I start the car again and mind-link everyone to rejoin me in driving, pulling out and onto the main road. There's not much further to go and then we'll reach my pack. I intended on getting my mate settled in and then going to search out Simon, my half-brother and visiting him. He also had enough on his plate, before being rushed into meeting absolutely everyone all at once. I wanted to meet him when he was relaxed where he was, for I suspected, it would take some visits and a lot of convincing for him to want to come and settle in at my pack, if he wanted to at all. For he had far more siblings at Winter's pack and my mother, sadly, wanted nothing to do with him when I told her, which made me incredibly sad.

I finally see my pack house up ahead and pull in front of it with a sigh of relief, stopping the car and undoing my seatbelt, stretching out the kinks in my neck. Willow stares up ahead, her face full of awe as she sees the largeness of the house. I'm grateful to see she seems to like it, slowly getting out of the car and looking around with curiosity.

"It's beautiful" she breathes, her eyes wide as she looks at the house "it's big but homely looking" she adds.

I give her a warm smile "welcome to my pack. This is my home" I say sincerely, taking hold of her hand and leading her to the front door. Behind

us I can hear other cars pulling up and my men going to their own homes, to sleep off their tiredness from fighting and driving.

I open the door with my keys and then usher her inside, watching as she looks around with fascination and eagerness. Her hands lightly touch some artwork in the entrance and she smiles at it. It's always humbling to see someone react to your home like that. She was impressed and I couldn't help but wonder what the pack house at her pack was like. Was it just as grand? Homely? Or was it cold and forbidding like I was imagining it to be like. I was extremely grateful that my mother was asleep, not wanting her to meet Willow just yet, until I could talk to her. I didn't want her to mistreat Willow nor be cold to her. She would accept Willow or I would have to put my foot down. The only reason I didn't do that with Simon was because of the hurt mother was dealing with in finding her mate had in fact been alive and had another child with that woman. I had given her time to grieve. But Willow was a different matter and I wanted her to feel welcome in my home.

Her stomach gives a growl and I laugh as she bites her lip, looking shy.

"Let's get you some food and then to bed" I say, leading her to the kitchen. I was quick, my hands deft and efficient as I made the best sandwiches I could at that late hour. Peanut butter and jelly. To be fair, she scoffed them down, as did I, with a big glass of milk. Ah, it was so satisfying. I was proud of myself, even as I felt the tiredness beginning to creep in. I gave a yawn as I placed the dishes in the sink. Willow did the same. She was swaying slightly on her feet now and barely able to stand upright. I quickly grabbed hold of her hand and led her upstairs.

I quietly pulled her into my bedroom and watched as her cheeks turned bright red. I could have smacked myself in the face. Of course, she was going to think the worst with what she was used to. I flushed and glanced at her quickly, letting go of her hand.

"This is my room" I say sternly "but I didn't bring you in here, well for that" I say gesturing with my hands.

She looks a bit worried but nods, still staring at the bed. I sigh. I need to explain myself better.

"I want to just lie beside you in bed" I tell her sincerely "just to hold you in my arms, nothing more. But if that is too much or you don't want to, I will find you another room to sleep in. Just say the word and I'll respect it. No questions asked, no pressure."

She looks like she's wrestling with something in her mind as she gazes around the room. I wait patiently for her to speak.

Finally, she does. "I would like to lie in the bed with you" she says slowly, her musical voice filling the air "I really don't want to be alone to sleep tonight. But I have nightmares" she admits, hanging her head, her hair covering her face, like she's ashamed of it.

I reach out and grasp her by the chin, gently lifting it. "Then I will be there to comfort you" I promise her "and help you. There's nothing to be ashamed of. Sometimes I have nightmares too."

She brightens. I show her the bathroom and she scurries inside, while I go and fetch some clean sheets for the bed. She takes her time and I knock on the door, worried when she's been in the shower for a while.

"I don't have any other clothes" she squeaks, opening the door slightly, like a crack.

I grin. "I can lend you some boxers and shirt for now."

I grab them and pass them through the door. The shower turns off and she comes back into the bedroom, dressed in my clothes as my cock twitches looking at her. I hastily excuse myself and jump into a very cold shower, coming back in a towel, to find that my mate is asleep, curled up on her

side, facing the wall. I dress in some boxers and get in, careful to avoid waking her up, lying on my side and placing a protective arm over her as tingles run through my body and part of me grows heated. She looks so angelic, lying there, her hair covering the pillow, her body warm beneath my arm, her chest rising and falling. My shirt was way too big for her, more like a nightgown on her but it was adorable and my boxers were rolled over to fit. She smelt so sweet as I inhaled her scent and She looked like she belonged, in that bed, and with me. The question was, would she accept me as her mate in time, or would all of this, the responsibilities of being a Luna, be too much for her to bear?