Chapter 8: Unwanted gift

-Clara-

I have had nightmares all these days while staying at the Simmons' house. Most probably because Angel tosses and leaves me without a blanket. We might be too old or too big to share her bed. I assume that struggling to stay warm while asleep gave me to those bad dreams.

However, my body should be warmer since I am a werewolf, but the truth is I get cold fast. Fortunately, our territory is blessed with basically two seasons, autumn and spring. Usually, it is never too cold, neither too hot. It is perfect to live here. Just these couple of days, I felt something was... odd.

I wonder about the weather at Silver Rain pack; if I decide to move there, how would it be?

Angel is gone, and the bed is so soft and warm that I do not want to wake up. I would like to be spoiled today. At the packhouse, I must behave and try to be proper all the time, wake up early and follow the schedule of Luna Michelle. Meanwhile, at the Simmons's, the environment is homelike and relaxed. They are great people, and I love staying with them. They are family to me.

"Wake up! It is getting late!" Angel yells at me and trashed things around her room. So noisy!

"Please, I just want to sleep some more, Angel," I groaned and hid under the covers.

"The war is coming!" She is so loud when she wants to!

"Forget about me and save yourself," I say to her. It is warm and cozy. I can get killed in my sleep and do not regret a thing. Just do not wake me up for that.

I buried my face on the pillow and tried to hide from her loud persona. Angel is usually shy with other people, but with me - from time to time - she has these outbursts of an energized Angel.

"Mom made chocolate pancakes… I will eat them all." She signs out loud, and her warning pierces my ears. This shewolf knows my weakness, chocolate! My love, my life! I will get you for sure!

I know I should be cranky since I have not slept much, but I enjoy so much to be here that I cannot.

Dear Moon Goddess, those pancakes are the best!

We stayed up until late hearing Angel's mother. She has these amazing stories about the Moonlight pack that kept my mind up into fantasies of bravery, sacrifice, and love.

The Moonlight pack was slaughtered after the Species World War ended. According to Mr. Simmons, the intervention of our warriors was critical to end the war and sign the peace treaty at the World's Concilium.

In vengeance, rogues and rebel vampires attacked our original pack, almost wiping out our ancestors. This could have triggered another war. However, the survivors did not ask for vengeance; instead, they pleaded for this to never happen again to others. King Klaus I granted the survivors the grace to be accepted in any pack, extending this benefit to their descendants.

I understand better the reason for the Asylum Act and the need for the Royal Pack to keep a registry of werewolves who can move around packs without a problem. According to Mr. Simmons, there are less than twenty descendants nowadays.

Strangely there is not much information about this grace, and it is not even mentioned in history books. There is a note about the Moonlight pack, but it is brief. I have learned more about it from the Simmons. And they found out more from their years traveling around before settling down in this pack.

The Simmons are good werewolves, a good family. I love it when they tell me that I am part of their family. I feel their love.

They wanted to take me to live with them after my mother's death, but Luna Michelle insisted that she wanted to protect me. No one would deny something to our Luna. She said she was my Godmother, so I stayed with her. Probably, she held on to me because she lost her child, as I lost my mother.

Mrs. Simmons wants me to call her Aunt or Aunty, but it feels weird. They are deltas, experts in medicine, respected in the territory as brilliant minds, while I am just an omega. It would sound ridiculous to me; it would be even worst for others. I have already had enough with Mason trashing me. I get angry again, and something inside of me moves as well. It feels weird.

"Close your eyes and extend your hands," Angel was excited after our delicious breakfast.

At midnight I will be eighteen!

My best friend gave me my first gift; I am not counting any other present before this day.

It was a pretty white sleeveless short dress from my favorite store. I will look like an adult. Tonight, I will be wearing makeup for the first time!

"How do you feel?" Mrs. Simmons asked and touched my forehead to check my temperature.

As a skilled nurse, Summer Simmons is checking on my health. Shifting into your wolf can be painful and traumatic. I am glad she is by my side on this special day.

"I think I am well. It is just this weird feeling in my chest and a slight headache." I replied honestly.

Mrs. Simmons hugged me like my mother would do. She smells like cherries and old books. It is a heartwarming smell.

Angel's parents gave me a pair of black high heels! I have not worn high heels before. They are not so high, but I feel like falling from them. To balance those things will be my adulthood challenge. Ouch!

It is hard to use them, but they look so pretty on me. Ouch again! It begins to be more and more painful. Gosh! Why did I ask for them?

Oh! I look taller and my legs longer. However, the fun ends when my ankles began to kill me. This is torture! I will practice any other time!

We decorated their living room with balloons and flowers. I am so happy with the decoration!

I wore my new dress and flats. I could not manage the art of walking in high heels, but I will try again every day until I master it! "I will own these shoes; they will not own me!" What? Where did it come from?

Luna Michelle arrived with Rose late in the afternoon. They brought me more gifts, a long pink dress, and a blue cashmere sweater. All nice and pretty!

I am getting more clothes. "Are they trying to say something to me?" Wait! What is going on with me?

"I am sorry we arrived so late, darling. Marissa left today, and it took a little more than planned her farewell. Mason drove her back to her pack at the end; he should return in a few hours." I wish I could tell my Luna that I was not interested in knowing anything related to Mason. He is a jerk.

"Are you alright?" Rose asked me. My face is burning. It must be from anger, but I try to cover it up smiling.

"Yes, of course. I am just excited with so many presents."

"I think your wolf is manifesting herself. Your temperature is rising. I have been checking that since the morning." Mrs. Simmons is keeping an eye on me. So, this strange feeling is my wolf awakening.

A little after this conversation, Karima and Dorothy came too, they brought a big chocolate cake and more presents. Also... more clothes. I think I have plenty now, and it would be better to leave them here.

I am convinced to move here with Angel and her parents instead of getting back to the packhouse. I want to be away from Mason and his mean Luna.

We were joking and talking about their experiences when they shifted the first time. Mr. Mark Simmons had the best story. He explained how he decided to drink with his friends on his birthday and ended up shifting almost drunk. He hardly remembered any pain in the shifting but his more memory was about how he fell on dung at a farm outside of the territory. His wolf was mad at him with that first experience.

"I am sorry, I was not around when that happened, Mark. We should have been together since then." Mrs. Simmons looked at her mate with regret. He grabbed her hand to kiss it.

"Summer, it is alright. I do not regret our journey. You came back one year after when we were ready for each other. We went thru over the things that we were supposed to..." Mrs. Simmons just hugged him after that love declaration.

I hope to get along with my mate as the Simmons do.

I can only pray to my dear Moon Goddess that my mate is someone in this pack. That way, I can still visit my Luna often. I would prefer for my mate to be a chef or a baker. So he can feed me with the best chocolate desserts ever. Oh, chocolate! My one true love.

After all the stories of the first shifts, Mr. Simmon's story is by far the worst. I am glad my party is different from Mr. Simmons' eighteen birthday party.

Angel will be eighteen in a few more months, but I can tell she is learning from all the mentioned experiences. She learns from other's experiences. She will know what to expect by then.

They sang happy birthday to me, and I blow the candles repeating in my head my birthday wish, a nice and loving mate.

Everyone got a piece of cake. Karima and Dorothy left early since they had the first shift in the morning the next day. I thanked them. I know it was a bit of a sacrifice to take the time to greet me today despite their tiredness.

I began to feel hotter and hotter, sweating more. Mr. Simmons told us that it was better to go to the pond in the middle of the forest near the packhouse, as planned for my first shifting.

Ms. Simmons grabbed extra clothes for me and her in case I need her assistance in wolf form. I understand now why they gave me more clothes.

It is not midnight yet, but my symptoms are evident. My wolf is manifesting in my body. My headache is getting stronger until I heard a buzz in my ears that made me fall on my knees. I am so glad we just arrived at the pond.

Out of nowhere, I heard my bones cracking. It is painful, but the sound is terrifying. It scares me more than the transformation itself.

"Relax, let it happen." I heard Luna Michelle say it like a command.

I wish commands can affect me now because I cannot relax. I tried to contain my screams, but tears rolled on my cheeks, and I was sweating so much.

The bone-cracking that will make me shift from my human form to my wolf took a lot of time, or so I thought.

The sound of a buzz stopped, and I felt like something did a pop noise on my head. Then, I could clearly feel another presence inside of my head.

"Nice to meet you, Clara!" I heard a female's voice inside of my head. As I opened my eyes, I realized I was standing on four legs. It felt so weird. It was like I was trapped inside of this body, and I wanted to talk, but instead, I barked.

Luna Michell and the Simmons were shocked, while Rose and Angel were amazed looking at me.

"My name is Ianthe." My wolf introduced herself to me.

"Do you know why they look at me like that?" I am worried about those expressions on their faces.

"We look beautiful, Clara; they are shocked by our beauty!" Wow, Ianthe is very confident. I like her already.

"What is your name?" Luna Michelle asked my wolf.

"I am Ianthe. Nice to meet you in person, Luna." Ianthe replied through the mind-link and sat on her back legs.

I am marveled at how this magical being exists as part of me while I am part of her.

"You are so beautiful! Please, can you help Clara to see it for herself?" Mrs. Simmons asked my wolf. I stumbled since I wanted to go to the right, while Ianthe wanted to go left. I am not sure of what I am doing.

"Do not overthink this. Relax! We are together on this. I am with you; I will not let you get hurt." Ianthe is so confident in herself despite having just minutes awake.

"Now, I will take control, but you can jump to the front anytime to get the control back." Ianthe walked to the pond. I began to feel better, more comfortable in my body.

It was a night of a full moon, so I could see the reflection of my wolf in the water. The scenery is beautiful around me, the green forest, the pond with crystalline waters.

It is nighttime, but I can see everything clearly! I want to come back under the sun and run in wolf form.

My fur was light grey, while my belly and paws were white. There was a white spot with the shape of a diamond on my forehead. Our frame is small and slim, and our eyes are amber.

I feel blessed since my Goddess is looking at me right now. My fur shines under the light of the Moon.

"Wait, do you feel bad that I refer to both of us as one, like me, or what should I do?"

"It is alright to refer to us in the first person, do not worry. You and I are one." Ianthe tells me, and I feel relief.

"I want to run in the forest! I want to feel the wind on my fur!" I mind-linked Luna Michelle.

"Of course, darling, you can run! Run is part of our nature." Luna Michelle told me. "I miss it so much." Our Luna needs to leave now. Alpha James is calling her. She looked at Mrs. Simmons, who nodded her head. Did they mind-link?

"Just remember, do not go too far..." Luna Michelle warned me. "Stay within the forest parameters, Ianthe. Do not leave the protection of the thick forest. Nobody should see your wolf form, for now… Please, Ianthe, keep Clara safe."

I know Luna Michelle needs to head back to the packhouse and her mate. Rose will leave with her.

Luna Michelle has spent a lot of time with us already; her mate must be worried that she has been outside for so long.

Mr. and Mrs. Simmons decided to wait for me to come back from my ran, and Angel agreed to see me getting back shifting to my human form with their help.

I relaxed and felt the owner of this form. It is still me.

I turned around and run, run, and run. I felt free with the wind caressing my fur, jumping between branches and rocks. I was a wolf, and it was amazing!

Tonight, it is not cold neither warm. It is the perfect night and weather. I am so happy right now.

When I got closer to the border of the forest, I stopped and looked at a vehicle in the road. It feels like something is about to happen. I am just a mile away from the territory's limit.

My new wolf's senses are better now. I hear further and beyond. Besides, I felt my nose was blocked before because I can smell different scents from long distances. My only concern would be the season of pollination! My allergy will be hard to control, then!

"There is medicine for allergies, do not worry too much." I am so happy that Ianthe is my wolf!

Ianthe is curious and strong-spirited. We will be a great duo.

My wolf said we are special because Moon Goddess kissed our forehead before she was granted to me. That is why we have that white spot with the shape of a diamond.

My wolf does not remember Moon Goddess' appearance, but the feeling of being near her is hard to describe. The warmth, peace, and love you receive from her. She radiates love, love for us as their children.

As we stand at the border of the forest, we hide. The Luna ordered me to stay within the parameters of it. However, Ianthe is curious about a car getting inside of our territory. I recognize it as Mason's SUV. The patrol is far from this area; probably, he told them to not bother him. Jerk!

Mason stopped the car, got down, and growled, frustrated. Probably he is mad at himself since there was nobody else there. He sniffed the air trying to track a scent. Rogues?

Is Mason tracking rogues? Oh, my dear Moon Goddess! Rogues! That would be scary! Ianthe and I do not have enough experience to fight a rogue. Oh, I forgot to hide my scent!

Suddenly, the wind changed its direction while a dark cloud passed and covered the moonlight. It felt like a bad omen. I felt a cold ran thru my spine. Fear...

A scent hit me there where I was standing despite the distance. The wind brought it to me.

"Mate!" Ianthe howled.

"No!" I screamed in my head. I tried to control Ianthe with all my might.

"He is my mate; Mason was made for me!" Ianthe was so strong, and while I was fighting for control with her, I did not notice Mason walking to me at a fast pace.

Black eyes. Oh no! His wolf! Would he hurt me? Is he going to reject me?

"My mate would never hurt me! Trust our Mason."

"Ianthe, as much as I would like to agree with you. He will not love you… love me, us. You know what I mean! Please, we need to survive!" I felt the pull.

It was pure attraction towards him. It was gaining more power for Ianthe. She was keen on approaching Mason. I closed my eyes and try not to move.

I did not have to move; when I opened my eyes and raised my gaze, there he was.

"Mate!" Mason yelled. He bent before my wolf and caressed my fur.

Maybe he does not know it is me... Perhaps, he thinks I am someone else...

I am excited and scared at the same time at the contact with Mason. The feeling is out of this world. It was electrifying, and every caress ignites sparks that make my heart run wild.

Ianthe is humming in pleasure from the touch of her mate. It feels so right, but I am frightened.

My poor heart starts beating hard as the mixture of emotions invades me overpowering my senses.

"I would recognize your scent anywhere, Clara!" Mason said and got closer to me. Ianthe allowed him to hold me in my wolf form.

A strong emotion of security and warmth invaded me while in Mason's arms. He smells like coffee and burned caramel. He seems to be happy with me as his mate. Can I truly feel safe?

"Everything will be alright! Clara, he is our mate." That is what Ianthe thinks. I am not so sure. "I am his gift, the same way he is mine."

In his arms, I allowed a little hope to grow inside of my heart. Does his embrace mean that he is accepting me?

"What is your name little mate?" He asks but considering his eyes are totally black while his voice is deeper... this one is not Mason. This must be his wolf, the famous Jax of which everyone talks about in the pack.

Jax is happy to recognize Ianthe as his mate, his counterpart. What about Mason? Since I am included in that package, what would Mason say or do?

"I am Ianthe." She said to him by mind-link.

My wolf took total control of my body. I am fully aware of what is happening, but I cannot stop it. She purred and rested her wolf head on his chest. Ianthe even dares to lick his face.

Mason

smiled at me even with his black eyes. He is so handsome... Beyond his rocking body and masculine features, along with the sparks, or the attraction created by our bond, I want to believe he is the same good pup I grew up with. I wish he is not the jerk who badmouthed me for years. I would like to love him and him to love me back.

I loved the young Mason who trained hard to protect his pack, the one who took responsibilities to ease the work of his father. The young Alpha ready to face any danger or challenge to keep us safe.

"I love Jax, and he loves me back. Mason and you will love each other. The mate bond will just smooth the path for you both. You will see!" Ianthe is happy with the acceptance of Jax. I do not know what to do or what to feel.

Abruptly, Mason pushed me and took several steps away from me. He shook his head furiously and even pulled his hair out.

It breaks my heart this whole situation, he is suffering, but he is breaking my heart by acting this way.

"f**k!" He yelled and breathed in the opposite direction.

Mason was fighting his wolf.

Jax might like me... Ianthe, but Mason does not. His rejection breaks my heart, but I already knew it.

"I cannot believe this! f**k!" He yells again.

I can hardly breathe. I feel like something is breaking inside of my chest.

"It must be the potion… I drunk the potion Sky gave me. I kissed you, so my wolf is bewitched. That should be... No! Yes! No!"

Mason kept pulling his hair with both hands; his eyes are almost out of his sockets while struggling with himself.

Ianthe is mad and sad at the same time; the human part of our mate does not want us... he does not want... me.

I would like to run away while Ianthe wants to fight for our mate, make him understand.

I am his true mate, I am sure. And I am aware of the attempt of Sky to become Luna with that potion, but it can't have effects until now, right?

"Or... you gave me something… Yes! You... you poisoned me with the tea!" Mason is losing his mind. He was shaking.

"Please, understand this is the wish of Moon Goddess," Ianthe said to him because I could not. I was hurt. I wanted to hide in the back of my head and cry.

How can he think I would do something like that? The tea was served three days ago. Karima helped me to prepare it, everyone saw what I was doing, there was no potion!

"This is impossible!" His eyes are flickering black again. Jax is fighting him.

"Moon Goddess made us for each other. You are my happiness the same way as I am yours." Ianthe is still hopeful.

Maybe, Ianthe can reach him and convince him. If she does not... we are dead.

"Mate!" Jax yelled again in despair. He was also fighting Mason.

Jax wanted to touch me. Mason did not allow him; he turned his back on me and walked to his car. He slammed his car's door open to jump in.

Ianthe feels we are not done yet with Mason, we need to make him understand, but we do not know what else to say.

I followed Mason to his car and broke the rule of not leaving the safety of the thick forest.

Ianthe barked at Mason. She is getting mad at him for walking away from us.

"A mate is a gift…," I tried to convince him. I feel so lame. Nothing better came out of me.

"No. You are not." He said with venom in his tone. "It is a lie, a trick. I will not even reject you because that would mean that I accept that you are my mate. My mate? Please, what a joke! You are nothing but a stupid and weak omega! You worth nothing! I do not want you!" Mason spitted his last words and jumped inside of his SUV.

Ianthe howled in pain; he does not want us. Our mate prefers Marissa!

Mason left me as if I am nothing. Ianthe can hardly keep standing.

I wanted to run away from here, cross the border and lose myself in this pain. But the Simmons... They are waiting for me to return to the pond. I should head back to them... I just cannot stand up from the ground. I have four legs, none of them is working.

I am laying down on the cold soil.

"What happened Clara?" Angel approached me looking concerned, I focused then. Her mother was behind her, Mrs. Simmons! I cannot speak, what can I tell them?

Ianthe? My wolf is quiet. She is in so much pain. Mason has rejected us!

Mrs. Simmons used a blanket to cover my body. I did not realize I shifted back to my human form. I did not even feel the pain of the transformation.

I am not protected by the forests and their trees. Others might have seen me... but I did not care. I forgot because of Mason.

"You are going to be alright; I will hold you now, okay?" Mrs. Simmons said and picked me up in her arms.

Summer is a delta. Intelligent... She is stronger than me. Anyone is... I am just a stupid and weak omega.

"What is going on? I do not understand, please! What is wrong? Mom, why is dad bringing the car here?" Angel is asking so many questions, I cannot say... I am exhausted.

"We will talk later. Just cover the view if the patrol approaches us." Mrs. Simmons says, but I am not sure to understand.

"Okay, okay. I am just worried. I do not understand! Why is this happening?" Angel, my sweet sister, I wish I can tell you.

Mason is mine... He was supposed to be my gift; yet, he does not want me. I am just an...

"Unwanted…" I mumbled.

Mrs. Simmons looks at me with sadness. I sensed she understands why I am like this. I was so happy an hour ago and now...

"What? What is unwanted?" Angel asks again. There is deep concern in her voice.

"I am..." I said to her, "The unwanted gift… me," My eyelids are heavy, and I close my eyes as the darkness engulfed me.