

## Chapter 48

It was your average everyday werewolf house that screamed 'retired couple'.

Pictures hung from the walls with Maxim, Lukas and Leonardo at all ages. The furniture was white and modern, completely contrasting with the physique of the place. I adored it.

The kitchen wasn't hard to find, and by the time I was there, Natoya had already washed all the dishes.

I grabbed a tablecloth as I moved towards her.

"Alexander asked me to come and help you," I announced as she spun to face me. She smiled slightly.

"Oh, that's fine. I'm done here." Her tone was slightly dismissive, clearly telling me that she didn't need my help. I could literally smell the cold shoulder she was giving me, but I had no idea why and I had nowhere else to go. Alexander wanted me here, and she wanted me out there.

"I sort of have to stay inside." I just came right out and said it. Her gaze shifted toward the door before she chuckled a bit.

"Alexander?"

"Right," I nodded.

"Well, you can put that table cloth to good use then," she said with a smile. She was sort of giving me whiplash. Now she was suddenly welcoming me to stay.

"Your home is lovely, by the way," I told her as I proceeded to clean the counters. I didn't want to be in silence. It was suffocating.

"Oh, thank you," she beamed. "It has been in our family for generations. You must know something about having things for generations, right?"

I shrugged. "Um. Not really. I didn't have my parents around to give me heirlooms and stuff."

Natoya cocked her head to the side as she watched me as if I had just said something strange. "Really? So you have no clue that you practically reek of that cursed moon shard?"

My heart fell. How many people even knew about that?

"Oh right... that," I mumbled as I blew out a frustrated breath. "But unlike this house, I have no clue where it is, and I have no sentimental desire to have it."

She shrugged. "Well, if I could help you get rid of it, I would. I've always hated the idea of the moon goddess giving mortals something so powerful. If she couldn't keep it from the star dragon or whatever his name is, how can we?"

"I really don't know. I just want to be rid of it myself."

"Smart choice," she smiled swiftly. "It will bring nothing but trouble. And those border breaches told me it has started already. It didn't make sense to me until today when I saw you. There's only one place I've seen that colour in your eyes, and it was a moon shard. A few years ago, I was at a pack meeting with Alexander, Maxim and Leonardo."

"Is that where Leonardo met Fiona?" I asked in curiosity. I knew moon shards aren't just

thrown all over for everyone to see, so it was possible that they saw the same shard.

Natoya nodded with a smile. "She was just as intrigued by it as I was, and it was only fate that caused me to drag Leonardo along with us that day instead of Lukas." Her smile lingered for a while at the distant memory. "Anyways, I always knew those things were trouble, and I admit that this was the first thought that came to mind when I saw you over an hour ago. But the moon makes no mistakes. If you're here, then you were supposed to be. I just hope this doesn't cause any more troubles."

"Me too," I admitted. I couldn't feel hurt that she thought I would bring trouble because I thought so too. I already have. Hopefully, Toya's recipe will keep the dragons away for a while.

"So, what do you--"

"Hold on," I interrupted her as my stomach plummeted. I only ever felt like that when Maxim was extremely annoyed. I focused my hearing on the conversation outside as I became rigid.

"What are you saying, dad? What are you really saying?" Maxim asked, and by the sound of his voice, he was pissed.

I flung down the table cloth and dashed for the door, but a hand clamped onto mine.

"No, Melissa. Just let them talk," Natoya said with pleading eyes. But behind those eyes, I also saw purpose, which only meant she was in on whatever Alexander was saying to upset Maxim this much.

I wrung my hand from her grip and barged through the door.

They were still sitting, but Maxim seemed like he was on the blink of lunging at his dad.

As I emerged, Alexander eyed both Natoya and me in slight annoyance. "You were supposed to keep her in there," he said, and I raised an eyebrow at him. "Anyways, it doesn't matter. Melissa, tell me, please, wasn't Lukas the one who brought you here?"

I nodded as I approached the table slowly. "Yes."

"Right!" he cheered. "Lukas's intention was to have you as his wife and Luna."

"Lukas's intention was to have me as a breeder," I corrected. "What is this even about?"

Maxim's jaw ticked. "My father here was only trying to convince me to let Lukas have you," he said, shocking me out of my socks.

"What?"

"Melissa, think about it. If it wasn't for Lukas, you wouldn't have even met Maxim. And if Maxim wasn't here, you would've been with Lukas. He is the first Alpha, after all. If anyone should have a Luna, it's him."

"We are both Alphas, dad," Maxim growled. "The whole 'first Alpha, second Alpha' thing was your idea. Lukas agreed that if either of us had our Luna, then it wouldn't matter. Do you really expect me to just hand my mate over to my brother just because you said so?"

"How dare you," I scoffed as I faced Alexander. "How dare both of you!" I turned to Natoya, too, knowing she was in on this.

"Melissa, let's go," Maxim said as he got up from his chair. But I shook my head.

"He will never be enough for any of you, right? Even when he has done nothing but work hard and try to please you, he'll never be enough. Was this the motive for this breakfast anyway? To make my mate feel like he doesn't deserve me? Or was it to see if I didn't meet your standards, so you could determine if I was just the useless equivalent fit for him? But since you approve of me for some reason, you'd rather I'd be with Lukas instead because he was always the son who deserved everything."

They both stood in silence, showing that I hit the nail right on the head.

"Lukas is a great guy, he is. He was nice to me when he picked me up from home that day. For the first time in my entire life, he made me feel safe on the way here. So yes, he's a great guy. He deserves happiness, and now that I'm thinking about it, he is sort of just like you two."

"Melissa, let it go," Maxim pleaded, but I was too heated.

"You think that Lukas is so perfect... that he deserves the girl even if it means putting your other son in misery. Did you even think about that?" I asked, and Natoya's tearful gaze shifted to Maxim for a while. "I am so sorry to come into your home and be so disrespectful. I had no parents to raise me, but I was taught to always respect others."

"Melissa..." Maxim pulled on my hand, but I didn't move.

"But do you want to know the real reason why you haven't met me sooner?" I asked, evidently intriguing them both.

"Stop, Melissa."

"Lukas bit me. He forced his mark on me because, just like you two, he couldn't bear to see me with Maxim," I said. Maxim sighed as he buried his face in his hands.

To say his parents were shocked was an understatement. Natoya had to grip Alexander's arm to keep standing, and he was staring at me as if I told him the world would end tomorrow.

"We were great friends, feelings got involved, and he got hurt. I still regret the fact that he fell for me in such circumstances, but his wolf, his pride and his anger drove him to do something so utterly wrong to me, and I was sick for weeks." I paused as I pointed at Maxim. "Look at him now and be proud because he was the one who stuck by my side for two whole weeks to ensure I was fed, clean and rested. He lost sleep, work time and meals for me. He told me that he wasn't going to say anything to you guys about it because it would tarnish the image of Lukas in your minds, and I'm sorry if I did."

"But I had to show you that Maxim is one hell of a man, and he doesn't deserve your second-best love. And you know what? I'm not even angry at Lukas anymore. I understand now that he had always gotten what he wanted, and that's not because he's Alpha. You have spoon-fed him everything he ever wanted, and so he doesn't understand what rejection and acceptance look like. He was so torn about what he did to me because he didn't know that he won't get everything he wanted in life, and that's on you two. Not Maxim, not him, but on you."

I took a deep breath as I composed myself.

"You raised two great sons who deserve happiness and love. And maybe one day Lukas will find that. But I am staying with Maxim. We'll see you at the induction ceremony."

And just like that, we left.

Maxim was silent, but I was grateful that he wasn't angry at me. I wouldn't blame him if he

was. I had just kicked his parents in a hole and flung mud at their faces. But I couldn't sit around and watch them disrespect him like that. It was wrong, and it was immoral.

They probably won't like me anymore. But I could live with that. I didn't crave their approval anymore.

So much for meeting the parents.



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