

Chapter 55

The area soon cleared as people went on with their daily lives. I still got a few messages in the mind link from other pack members, expressing their congratulations and welcome. I no longer had a connection with only Maxim. I had one with everyone here, including Fiona and Lukas. I was excited.

As Maxim and a few members talked, I waited by the car for him when I saw his parents approaching me. I grew stiff. I couldn't read their faces, but it couldn't be anything good.

"Hello, Melissa," Alexander greeted as soon as they were in hearing range.

I waved awkwardly. "Hello."

"Congratulations," he added. "I wasn't lying when I said you'd make a great Luna."

"But just not a great one to Maxim?" I wanted to add but decided against it.

As if he could hear my inner thoughts, Alexander frowned.

"Look, Melissa. We just wanted to apologise for how we treated you and Maxim that day," he said, shocking me to the core.

"You're apologising?" I had to be sure.

"Yes," he replied. "We were unfair to Maxim all his life, and if it wasn't for you, we wouldn't have noticed."

Natoya nodded. "He's right. We feel awful about everything. You're good for Maxim, and he's perfect for you. I admit that at first, I was upset with how you two left, but I realised that as a mother, I can sleep well at night knowing that my sons have someone so brave to look after them."

I nodded, humbled by their calmness. "I appreciate your apology," I said. "And I apologise for my behaviour as well. I was a bit rude. But have you apologised to Maxim?"

"Yes, we have. We also talked to Lukas. He's working on himself, and we respect his decision." Alexander sounded sad as if whatever Lukas was doing was bad. "Anyway, we just wanted to clear the air with you too. We hope to have you over again soon."

I smiled a bit. "We'll see."

I was always big on forgiveness. Holding grudges only yields more heartbreak.

As they left, Maxim approached me.

"Hey there, my Luna," he mumbled as he kissed my lips. I giggled.

"My Alpha."

"How does it feel to finally be a part of our pack?" he asked, leaning against his car, still holding onto my waist.

"Great. I feel so welcomed and accepted here. My old link with my pack back home was always so cold. Nobody liked me there."

"Well..." he mumbled against my lips. "...we all love you here."

I wrapped my arms around his shoulder. "And I love you all too."

I kissed him softly for a while, completely aware of the eyes all around. Even though it was just about midday, I already felt the effects of my heat coming. I could feel the sweat running down my back, and my skin tingled a hundred times more than usual when Maxim touched me. It was crazy.

I whined with a huff when Maxim pulled away.

"Later," he assured, his eyes dancing in excitement. "But for now, let's go home. I think Lukas called for a private meeting."

I chuckled. "He's getting right on it, huh?"

"I guess." Maxim shrugged.

We drove in silence all the way back to the Alpha house. Lukas, Fiona and Leonardo were all in the living room, and the atmosphere felt serious.

I instantly stiffened as I looked among them, trying to pinpoint a problem. But the only problem I could see was Leonardo still evidently being mad at Lukas and Fiona trying to calm her mate. Since the incident, Leonardo hasn't spent more than five seconds around Lukas, which was surprising considering that they work hand in hand as Alpha and Beta. Fiona was always the mediator.

Relief flashed across Lukas's eyes as we entered. But I was still panicking.

"What's going on?" I asked.

"Sorry we're late," Maxim added, seeming not to notice the tension in the room. And if he did, he sure did a great job at ignoring it.

Lukas waited for us to sit before he spoke. "I'm leaving," he said, almost causing me to choke on my spit.

From the looks of it, he took everyone by surprise, even Leonardo.

"What do you mean you're leaving?" Maxim asked, taking the words from my mouth. I mean, after our sort of heart to heart at the gala, we've been talking and getting along like old times. So anyone could imagine my shock.

Lukas sighed as he sat on the arm of the couch. "Look, I know that for the past month, things haven't been the same. And that's not because of Melissa. It's because of me. I pushed too far, and..." he paused a while as he glanced at me. "I'm still in love with her."

Maxim stiffened beside me, but he didn't say or do anything else.

Lukas continued. "I know I have no right to, but I do, and she's going into her heat tonight, and I don't trust myself to be here. I can even already smell her scent changing, and it's driving me crazy. My wolf still believes she's his, and Maxim doesn't even trust me around her in general, let alone tonight."

"But you'll be back tomorrow?" I asked, feeling a bit more relieved now that I thought he meant he was only leaving for the night. But the look on his face said otherwise.

"Eventually, yes. But I need time away to heal, forgive myself and get over her. I can't do that here, and I think most of us need this." We all knew he was talking about Maxim and Leonardo, who still hadn't let go as yet.

"But you have a duty here at the pack," I pointed out. "People are going to notice."

"Maxim has you now. All it takes is one Alpha to rule a pack, and an Alpha with his Luna is

even better." He sighed as he saw that I was about to protest again. "Melissa, I need this. We all need this, even if you don't see it."

"When will you be back?" Maxim asked, shocking me even more.

"You're encouraging him?" I didn't want to take out my frustration on Maxim, but I thought he'd back me. But then again, why would he?

"I can't tell," Lukas replied. "A month, two months... probably a year. I won't stay away too long, though. As Melissa says, this is my home too."

Maxim simply nodded, ending it right there. Leonardo and Fiona were awfully quiet, so it seemed like I was the only one against this.

"But-"

"Melissa," Lukas and Maxim said at the same time. "Melissa, when Lukas decides to do something, we can't change his mind. It's been like that since we were kids. You evidently don't want him to go, and your opinion weighs heavily on his side. Don't make this harder for him," Maxim said.

"You're right. I don't want him to go. If I didn't come here...." My voice broke as my sentence hung. The heat was already messing with my emotions. It was like PMSing times ten.

"Hey, don't cry." Maxim scooped me in his arms, and even though I was upset that he wasn't helping me convince Lukas to stay, I allowed him to hold me.

"Melissa, I need this, okay? I can't get over you while I'm here. Every day I see you, I want you. Every time you smile, it seems more and more beautiful. My own brother doesn't trust me, and my Beta hates me. I have to, Melissa. Soon, you'll see that."

I didn't bother protesting. I had an awful feeling at the beginning of the day, and I guess this is what caused it.

"I don't hate you," Leonardo finally said. "But I do agree that a chance to actually miss you... might change how I feel about the entire situation, especially when our baby is born. I think I'd want you here to see him or her."

His words seemed forced as if his ego was fighting against the words. Still, they held the truth behind them.

"Thank you," Lukas said, turning to Fiona. "And you?"

She shrugged. "As Maxim said, you're as stubborn as a mule. I guess I'm okay with it, but you really need to be back for the birth."

His familiar smile pulled on his lips as he nodded. "I wouldn't miss it."

"Where will you go?" Maxim asked. I could tell that his voice was guarded, as if he was trying to hide his emotions. I knew he didn't want Lukas to go. None of us really did.

"I have a friend in New Mexico-Alpha Darius. I already arranged the trip, and he needs some help with his pack, much like Melissa's pack. So, I offered to help while I was there. That way, I can stay occupied too."

Maxim nodded as if accepting it. Still, my stomach felt uneasy.

"I leave today. I already sent my things because I'm running."

"Luke, that's like three thousand miles! That's 3 or four days running."

"I know," Lukas said with a shrug. "I want to do this. I'll stay in wolf form, hunt my meals and make the trip. I already decided."

Maxim sighed. "Well, okay then. It's nothing you haven't done before."

I found that intriguing. I've never been in wolf form that long before, and I don't think I could. I love being one with nature, but I'd like to sleep in a bed at night.

"I'll cook a substantial meal and help you with whatever else you need," Fiona offered as she stood. "What would you like?"

"Anything, thank you, Fiona." Lukas smiled as Fiona patted his shoulder. It was a long way from their usual hugs, but at least it was something.

Soon, Leonardo left too, and Maxim decided that he'd give us a minute. I simply stared at the rug as Lukas stared at me.

"Melissa, say something," he urged.

"You were my first real friend here, Lukas. Even when we weren't speaking, just knowing you were here gave me a sense of familiarity. I'm going to miss you," I admitted. I realised that there was no need to be angry.

No matter what I wanted, Lukas would be across the state by midnight, and I couldn't stop him. So, instead of being upset, I simply appreciated the few minutes we had now because I could already feel my heat coming down on me, and Lukas noticed.

"I'll miss you too," he said as he moved to sit beside me. "But I hope you know that I'm doing this for you as much as I'm doing it for me."

I finally met his eyes. "Just...just be safe, okay? I can't shake this feeling that something is wrong, and I hate that I feel it more when I'm close to you. Promise me."

"I promise." He pulled me to his side in a comfortable hug. I sighed against him, hoping that sooner rather than later, I'd be able to hug him again.

I do love Lukas. Perhaps not in the same way as I love Maxim, but he means a lot to me.

And I'd be damned if anything should happen to him.



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