

Chapter 17

Ember

I've never been a needy person. Hell, I've barely even been social, preferring my own company. That's suddenly all changed.

Since Damon marked me, I can't get enough of his kisses and gentle caresses. Every time he touches me, it's like little shock waves pulse through me.

My mind doesn't have any control anymore. My body seems to be calling all the shots. I can't even blame my wolf, not anymore.

I get the distinct impression that Damon is feeling the same, and I haven't even marked him yet.

I'm both excited and scared to think what will happen if I do mark him. I can barely function now without his touch; when the bond is complete, will we just walk around in constant contact like conjoined twins?

I relax into Damon's chest as he bathes me. Even as I try to luxuriate in the moment, I can't help but feel a little guilty that his mate is so worthless. I can't even walk, and despite what the healer says, I wonder if I will ever walk again.

I focus on my feet where they're poking up through the soapy water, and will them to move. Nothing happens.

I let out a heavy sigh.

It's bad enough that Damon has a mate who is unable to heal or defend herself, but one who can't walk? He's an alpha. His luna needs to be strong, not weak and pathetic like me.

Damon's hand wraps gently around my throat, his fingers softly caressing my skin. "Don't overthink it, little wolf. Just be patient," he whispers, his lips almost brushing the shell of my ear.

How does he even know what's going through my mind? "But what if...?" My voice trails off as the realization hits.

"*Traitor*," I growl at my wolf.

The only way that Damon could know what I'm thinking is if my wolf spilled her guts to his wolf.

"*You don't need to do this alone. Not anymore*," she huffs.

I hate to admit it, but she's right. It's been so long since I have been able to talk freely to anyone. Until now, only my brother knew that I was a conduit, and we never talked much about what that meant to me.

Oliver barely had the time to listen—or chose not to. It's strange to think I have someone who's willing, maybe even eager to hear my feelings. About my injury, and about the strange legacy that leaves me able to heal everyone but myself.

"What if my legs never heal..." I start, tentatively.

"Then I'll carry you," he soothes.

"But if anyone else finds out about..." I'm cut off by Damon's finger pressing gently to my lips, shushing me. Then his fingers move to my side, gently trailing across my rib cage.

“You feel that,” he whispers, his breath on my neck making me shiver with pleasure. I moan an acknowledgment as sparks light up my skin.

His fingers slowly move, tracing random patterns across my lower abdomen. “And this?” he coos.

I can’t even find any words. I just whimper as his fingers move lower. His hand cups my mons, and his fingers brush close to my entrance. “What about this?”

I arch my back, and I can’t help the moan that escapes my lips. Every nerve in my core seems to pulse; I feel like I’m standing on a precipice and one little touch will push me over the edge.

Damon sucks on my mark, and that’s enough. I tumble into ecstasy.

“Just tell me to stop and I will,” he offers.

I quickly shake my head. “Please,” I moan breathily.

“Please? You want me to stop?” he questions. His fingers stop moving, and he starts lifting his head away from my neck, though he can’t quite hide the disappointment in his voice.

I shake my head. That’s not what I want. The last thing I want him to do is to stop. “No. Please, Damon, don’t stop.”

Permission granted, his finger slips inside and gently strokes the little bundle of nerves, and I shatter for the second time.

Lost in a wave of ecstasy, I don’t feel him move from behind me. But when I open my eyes, feeling wrung-out and wonderful, he’s standing, leaning over the bath.

The water drips off of his bronze skin, his v-line disappearing beneath the white towel that's wrapped around his waist.

He's brought me to the peak of pleasure twice, but I haven't done anything for him yet, except whine about my own weakness.

My eyes dart down toward the towel, and I can feel my face flushing.

He chuckles in response, and the sound sends waves of arousal through me. What the hell is wrong with me? "This isn't about me, Ember. This is all about you."

He bends over toward me. "Now, put your arms around my neck and link your fingers together tightly."

I don't question him. For the first time since I arrived here, I do exactly as he tells me.

As my fingers link behind his neck, his lips gently brush mine, far too fleetingly. Before I can respond, he stands up straight.

I'm only now realizing how tall he is. He must stand around six foot four, whereas I'm only five feet tall even in low heels.

He pulls me from the bath. My useless legs hang limply, but he pays them no mind as he sets me on the counter to wrap a huge, fluffy towel around my body.

Then he scoops me into his arms once again as he walks toward the door.

I unlink my fingers and tease the hair that's hanging loosely on his neck. A deep growl, almost a purr, erupts from his throat. I wonder if it's his wolf making that noise, or him.

I don't have too much time to think about it before he opens the door and we head back into the bedroom. I gasp when I see bags too numerous to count littering the floor, designer names emblazoned all over the sides.

"Now, let's find you something to wear," Damon chuckles.

He places me gently on the bed and starts to pull clothes out of the different bags, tossing them onto the bed all around me. I'm quickly surrounded by sleek, brightly-colored tops and skirts and shoes like a jungle of fashion.

It's almost like he is looking for something, and I realize that's exactly what he's doing when he pulls a stunning dress from one of the bags.

He walks over and holds the dress up against me. The material is the softest thing I've ever felt.

In my old pack, we weren't poor, but we weren't rich either. There certainly wasn't money to spare for fancy dresses, and I wouldn't have had a reason to wear them anyway. Helping out at the hospital wasn't a formal occasion.

I've never seen a dress quite this beautiful, or obviously expensive. It's made of the softest silk and edged with gossamer-thin lace, pure white like a wedding gown, but form-fitting and sleek.

I've never even imagined wearing something like this. I gasp and hold it against me.

"This is too much," I whisper.

Damon just looks at me, his eyes roving my body. “You’re worth every penny. Besides, when I present my luna to my pack, I want her to wear something as stunning as she is.”

I look down. I suddenly feel sick. Damon wants me because I’m his mate, it’s instinctual. But what about the rest of the pack?

Do they feel the same as those tributes who attacked me in the corridor? That I don’t belong here, that I must be a spy or worse?

I feel Damon’s fingers gently touch the underside of my chin as he tilts my head up, obviously getting a report on my thoughts from my wolf again and wanting to reassure me.

“Those mutts weren’t even members of my pack, and now they never will be. You are my mate, and my luna. My pack will love you just as I do.”

His lips brush mine in a delicate kiss. It’s fleeting, but it carries a promise of so much more.

I watch Damon as he walks toward the walk-in wardrobe. It’s hard to take my eyes off him, the way his muscles move as he walks.

He’s almost at the door when he stops and turns to look back at me. “Do you need any help getting dressed?”

I glance at the dress and then back at him. My face flushes slightly, thinking about the sort of help he could give.

He smirks at me.

Damn wolf. She’s still telling him every wicked thought I have in my mind.

I clear my throat as I drag my eyes away from his body. “I could use some underwear,” I mumble.

Damon chuckles and walks back over. He peers into several of the bags until he finds the one that holds the underwear.

He raises an eyebrow, but there’s a glint in his eye as he carries it toward me. I look inside, and can’t help the blush that covers my face.

I’ve never worn underwear like this before. It’s all silk and lace, and very sexy.

Damon laughs at my embarrassment before heading back out to find some clothes for himself.

I could remind Damon that Joshua picked this out, but I doubt that would go down very well. Besides, Joshua probably had female help; I doubt any man would feel comfortable alone in a lingerie store. I wonder if it was Crystal.

Even though she deserted me, I still kind of miss Crystal. I’ve never had a friend before; Crystal was the closest I’ve ever come. Even in my old pack, I avoided friendships just in case they found out about my gift.

If I’m introduced as Damon’s luna, and if the pack doesn’t reject me outright, I guess I’ll have lots of people vying to be my friend now. It’s a powerful position, after all. The luna is the pack’s beating heart.

I swallow nervously. Butterflies seem to be breeding in my stomach. I’ve never liked being the center of attention; I guess I’ll have to get used to it.

By the time Damon returns, I have managed to get dressed. It's surprising how awkward getting dressed can be when you can't stand up.

Damon struts out of the wardrobe dressed in a designer suit and shoes polished to a shine that you can almost see your face in. The top few buttons of his white, button-up shirt are unfastened, revealing a few wisps of his dark chest hair.

I can't help but lick my lips. Damon is always all alpha male, but this outfit really highlights it.

His eyes rake over my outfit, and he lets out a low growl. I guess I pass muster too.

Then he walks toward the bed and scoops me into his arms. This way of getting around is something else I'm going to have to get used to, I think, as I wrap my arms around his neck. But if I'm honest, I don't mind at all.