

# Traded To The Lycan King by MG Wattsons

## Chapter 146

\*Hayes\*

It doesn't matter how good Nisha's food usually tastes, this time it lacks flavor. Or maybe it's lacking the privacy of not having everyone staring at me like. They sit across the fire as I pick at the food in my bowl, trying not to look up at anyone. Their eyes have been on me since the moment I slunk back after Kyra left me in the woods to sulk. Not that I was sulking, though. Because I wasn't. It was more than that. It was realizing how much I have missed her even when I don't have the right to. Well, that and feeling like a complete ass for pummeling Marcos in the face when he didn't do anything wrong. I mean, his hands were all over her, but what right do I have to be upset over that?

My stomach churns and I ignore it, refusing to acknowledge the truth I can feel deep in my gut. It doesn't matter that I don't have the right to care. I do, and I fucking hate that anyone else is touching her when my hand can barely register the touch of her skin. "So..." Nisha says, clearing her throat. "Are you going to apologize to Marcos next?"

I exhale, placing the bowl and spoon to the side. "What is your obsession with apologies, Nisha?" I ask.

She shrugs, a smug smile tugging at her lips.

"I was just curious." She says.

"Be less curious, Nisha." I mutter.

"Is there a reason you are being more of a jerk than usual, Hayes?" Koda asks, breaking into the conversation.

I scoff, reaching up to drag my hand through my hair. My twisted flesh covered fingers tangle in my locks and I struggle to get them out, my fingers refusing to bend as they do on occasion. I yank hard, but the jerky movement doesn't go unnoticed by the blazing light brown eyes watching me from under her long lashes.

"You know, if your hand is acting up again, you should have Marcos take a look." Dean offers. "He probably won't even want an apology."

"Can we just drop the Marcos thing?" I growl, annoyed with their antics as they try to hide their amused faces.

"Why don't you guys fill me in on the plan?" She says, drawing the attention to her. I glance at her, surprise in my brows, and she sends me a soft smile. One that lets me know she is changing the subject for my own good.

"Right," I clear my throat. "Alpha Merikh has provided us with some intel, giving us a few ideas of where Ezraah may have potentially gone. Since we are in a time of war, trespassing on the Fae's territory is dangerous, but since we are allies, most of them anyway, we should be okay."

Kyra's brows knit together in thought before she frowns.

"And you plan to just wander around and hope to come across him?" Kyra asks, sounding shocked and unimpressed.

"What else do you expect? We have vague sightings and hopeful chance encounters. There is no solid proof of where he is, just verifying where he isn't." I explain. "For close to two years, we have traveled in search of him and found absolutely nothing."

"And you hope to find him in the void between the areas you have checked off?" She asks, looking amused yet skeptical.

"When you have nothing else to go off of, you kind of start getting desperate." Dean says and she chuckles.

"And where do I come into play, then?" She asks, "I mean, I am here to track him, am I not? Does that not alter the plan at all?"

I look around at the others, who shake their heads and laugh to themselves. It is annoying and cute how highly Kyra thinks of herself. She always did undervalue herself back when we were younger.

"You can't track a ghost, Kyra." Koda grins.

"Ezraah is not a ghost," Kyra says matter of fact.

"He might as well be." Nisha cuts in now. "Look, the guy was a messenger. A fae messenger. That means they don't travel like normal people do. His speed and ability-

"I am well aware of what he is and how his kind moves." Kyra interjects Nisha. I watch as Nisha's face goes from shock to frustration. She has never handled being talked over well, even when I do it. "I mean no disrespect, but I was briefed on all of this." "Then you know you are of no use to us." I say, doubling down on making sure she knows she is not needed. What use is a tracker when you can't even find a place for them to start tracking?

"How about you all let me deal with the details and do what I do best. All of you have spent close to two years on this mission, and yet, it has yielded nothing." She reiterates.

I scoff, trying to hide the offense I feel, but I fail miserably.

The others must feel the same way as the others grow more tense, Nisha's anger rising, Dean grows despondent and Koda licks his teeth rearing to toss a smart ass comment out. But yet no one says anything, all of them looking to me to speak instead. "We have figured out where he is not." I remind her and she shakes her head in disappointment.

"It's not about where he is not,

Hayes. It's about when he IS. You

keep telling me he isn't here or there when you looked in the past. But how do you know he isn't right on our heels going where you have checked? Remaining unnoticed under your noses because they are pointed the opposite way?"

"And what do you plan to do when you find him like you say you will, huh?" Nisha barks out, unable to keep her mouth shut any longer. "Be a good little doggy and wag your tail and point in his direction." "Nisha!" I groan. "That is enough."

"Sorry," she mutters, looking ashamed. "But she is saying all our time invested is what? For nothing? Useless? It's bullshit."

"Tracking isn't the process of elimination. It is a calculated process of finding clues and following them in the right direction. I know you have had trackers before, and no, I'm not under the impression I will just join you guys and find him in a few days. This will take time." "I am running out of time and patience," I grind out. "The dragons are growing desperate and moving closer even despite the risk it poses to them. There is no ending this war without finding the Fae asshole."

"Then let me be the patient one

while you guys continue on doing what you have been doing. I will look deeper, search for things you don't think to examine." She explains. Her words are almost ones of pleading, like she is begging us to let her help. To trust her, but trust is hard for people like us who hardly have it in us to trust each other.

But Kyra is so confident. Her voice is unwavering and her shoulders squared as she defends and explains what a tracker is to us. She sounds like she knows what she is doing and she looks even more like she believes it. "We have never had a tracker before." Dean says and I shoot him a glare dark enough to melt his lycan away. The asshole didn't have to tell her that. I watch as Kyra's eyes shoot up in surprise.

"Alpha Merikh said you had used some in the past." She says, looking confused.

"We had some join us for a short time." I admit, scratching the back of my neck. Her eyes narrow as she looks around at all of us.

"How short, exactly. Because I am getting the vibe that maybe you guys drug all your trackers and leave them behind?" She snaps and I chuckle nervously.

"No," I try to reassure her, but Dean's and Koda's faces betray the truth. "We have never had to drug any of them before. Just a day or two with us and they sort of wanted to leave."

Kyra looks around at each of us, a dry laugh tumbling from her lips as she shakes her head in disbelief.

"Why would you not want a tracker to help? I don't get this blatant distrust of someone so useful."

"It's not that we don't want the help but..." Dean stops mid sentence, the words falling off like he wants her to follow his thought process.

"But what?" She demands, crossing her arms over her chest. Her eyes fill with a dare, waiting for him to say something scathing.

"They are cocky and all important." I say, drawing her attention to me, the full weight of her stark annoyance bearing down on me, and I realize like it when her eyes are on me. And I like how her nose seems to

scrunch, drawing her freckles together, making her adorable and not at all lethal looking.

"For a group that has gone so long on a failure of a mission, those are some weighted words." She bites out, clearly restraining herself.

I see Marcos walking up to us, clearly coming to swap with Dean for night watch.

"This looks like a fun conversation." He mutters, sliding a soft smile to Kyra who struggles to return it through her own anger. "Dean, you are up for watch." "I'll go," Kyra says, jumping up far too eager. "I'd hate to get left behind again."

"You really should rest," Marcos says, reaching out to gently grab her wrist. She stops, looking at his hand before she pulls it away.

"The only people who rest well are the ones with trust. I have none of that with any of you." She says, her voice cold.

Then she walks off into the dark.

"Well, that went well." Nisha mumbles.

"I'll go talk with her." Marcos sighs, turning right back around to follow her. I stand, stepping in front of him, looking at where Kyra still strides away from us. "No, I will go." I assure him, and he frowns.

"Honestly, it's probably best if it's Marcos who goes, Hayes." Dean offers gently. "He is a little less quick to anger and, well...they seem to get along rather well." "I get along with Kyra fine," I argue and everyone looks away as if they don't want to tell me I am wrong. "I do."

"I'll be back later," Marcos says before he steps around me, clapping me on the shoulder with a sympathizing look before he saunters off after my Kyra.

## Chapter 147

\*Kyra\*

I wander in a circle around the perimeter of the camp, my eyes open and ears on high alert, looking for trouble. More like asking for trouble. What I really need to do right now is punch something, well, someone. I could see it in Hayes' face, the way he watches me with a smug look when I talk about trackers and what we do.

He is looking down on me, remembering me from when we were kids and assuming I never changed. Which is hilarious considering that when I look back at eighteen-year-old me, she seems so immature and far away. I was a warrior, but I had no motivation to push myself. That changed when I had a broken heart to protect and nowhere else to go.

It's strange how we find strength after being broken. A true test of character is going from having everything to having nothing and trying to find a way back up again. Strength is feeling betrayed by others, so you have to learn to trust yourself. I learned that from Tyler. So everyday I grew stronger, a new drive to be the best, for myself and everyday Tyler showed up and he trained me. He waited for me to find myself before pushing the mate bond. And it was his patience and persistence that made me accept him.

A soft owl hoot from above brings me back to where I'm at, making me shake my head of the past thoughts. I duck under a low branch before a shiver runs up my spine and I realize I'm not alone. A stick snaps to my right, on the other side of the tree where I stand and I press myself against the dry bark.

There were no signs of dragons in the area. No heat or dying foliage, but then again, I hadn't seen that around when I was attacked last time, either. I peek around, searching

into the darkness for someone, when a soft shadow is cast across the tree from the moon peeking through the branches. Instinct kicks in and I sprint toward the source, carefully placing my feet in spots that have no sticks of dried leaves. It feels like I slam into a brick wall from behind before it gives way and falls forward. The figure grunts, throwing its hands out to stop itself before landing on all fours.

I twist as I fly over their head, my arms scooping up and under their armpits locking onto them. As I fall over them, their body rises up into the air, slipping from my grip. I growl in annoyance as I roll over to my stomach, forcing myself up, but I'm not fast enough as a body slams into my chest, throwing me backward.

Pain laces up my side as I grit my teeth, refusing to give them the satisfaction of knowing they found a weakness on me. My claws come out, as I grip on and dig my nails into the warm body I feel through the shirt. They lift their head and cry out in shock and pain. The blood in my face drains and I retract my claws, letting go as they roll over me, straddling my body.

"Damn it!" Marcos grumbles, his face close to mine. "Kyra stop! It's Marcos!"

"Why didn't you say anything earlier?" I hiss at him as he glares at me.

"I was a little busy being tackled," he grumbles.

He doesn't move from his spot, clearly worried I might try to attack him again. My body relaxes under him, my arms falling to the side of my head with his grip on my wrists. There is no denying the position we are in looks and feels intimate, more so than when Hayes gave him the black eye he is currently sporting.

"You snuck up on me while I was on watch." I retort and tilt my head to the side.

A smile breaks over his perfect face and I feel a fluttering in my stomach. No man has ever been this close to me, in this type of position, but Tyler.

Suddenly my cheeks flush pink and I find myself looking away, hating that my body misses this type of warmth and the weight of a man above me. It's not all sexual, but more the nostalgia of what would happen and with whom when I was usually like this. "I wasn't trying to sneak up on you." He mutters, his eyes falling to my lips as my mouth goes dry.

Marcos is undeniably attractive, hell I'd venture to say he looks angelic. His face is perfectly symmetrical with a tan that makes me think he spends all his days at the beach. And his dark hair and light-colored eyes make him all the more alluring. But this spark with him, this feeling in my gut, is a memory of what Tyler could do to me.

Marcos is easily trouble for me. He is the kind man I could be with and has no sadness over him also being with someone else, because I would almost expect it from him. But

my heart is not in the place for such things, not when it is confused and thinking it belongs to Hayes again.

"Are you going to just lay on top of me or are you going to help me up and tell me why you came out here?" I ask, meeting his eyes.

I watch the way his face shifts from almost a sensual haze to reality and his eyes grow wide before he releases my wrists and jumps up. He reaches out, offering me a hand as he tugs me back up and I dust myself off.

"Sorry," He says, rubbing the back of his head. "I kind of got carried away."

"Why are you out here, Marcos?" I ask him.

He frowns.

"I was just checking on you." He offers as an explanation and I scoff, a disbelieving smile tugging at the corner of my lips.

"I am fine." I tell him truthfully.

"It didn't seem like it when I walked up. And then when Nisha filled me in..."

"None of you have faith in my abilities, and it's annoying. But truth be told, I'm not here to impress anyone or prove myself. I am here to get the job done, and I will." I shrug.

Marcos exhales heavily, walking over to me before plopping down on the ground and leaning up against a tree.

"Trackers make most of us feel useless." He says with a sigh.

"How is that?" I ask him.

"We are warriors, and we are hunting someone we have never gotten close enough to even scent. Do you have any idea how upsetting that is? It's like hunting fucking bigfoot. Half the time I wonder if this Ezra guy actually exists or if Alpha Merikh imagined this scenario up." He admits.

I can see the guilt in his eyes the second he says the words. He squeezes them closed and exhales.

"Alpha Merikh is not the kind to make things up." I say and he nods.

"No, I know that it's just..." He pauses and then he leans forward. "Hayes is his brother, his beta, and he hates Alpha now. He can barely stand to be in the room with him. How are we supposed to trust one while trusting the other?"

I hear a gentle shifting of leaves behind us and I look back, seeing nothing, smelling nothing before rising and taking two steps in the direction. Marcos comes up to my side his hand on my back as I lean forward and squint my eyes,

"I

searching for anything.

I can feel eyes on me, as if there is a weight pinning me in place, but it doesn't feel threatening. Instead, it feels almost safe, like for once I'm not afraid of what is behind me.

"Do you see anything?" Marcos whispers, and I shake my head.

"No, it's just an animal." I mutter before I turn, Marcos' hand staying where it was as my body moves and I look down, finding the warmth of his palm on my stomach. He yanks it back and clears his throat. "apologize." He offers me a sincere look.

"It's fine." I say nervously, creating a space between us. "You can head back and go to sleep, Marcos."

"Are you sure you are going to be okay?" He asks.

I frown at him. "Why is it you guys don't fawn over Nisha, but with me, you all assume I am weak and in need of constant check ups?"

He blinks at me, his mouth falling open before he snaps it shut and gives me a tight smile.

"To be honest, my concern is out of guilt."

"Ah, you drugged me so you feel responsible." I say, and he gives me a grin.

"Guilty. Though I will also admit I am attracted to you."

My eyes widen, completely taken aback. Of all the things to say, on a mission like this, that is not something I expected from anyone.

"Uh, well. Thank you, I guess?" I offer, crossing my arms over my chest, my cheeks blushing red.

"I know that there is something going on between you and Hayes, but-"

"Woah! There is nothing going on between me and Hayes." I snort. "We used to be best friends, that is it." .



He looks at me skeptically.

"As the guy sporting this sexy black eye, I can assure you that is not it. Hayes doesn't blow up like that. Hell, the Hayes he has been since you entered the picture is not the same one we knew before." I tilt my head, unsure if I should feel flattered or offended.

"How was he before?" I ask, my voice a little squeaky.

"Well, I never knew the pre-war Hayes. Not well enough to say I knew him. But Hayes, before you came, was...well he was robotic. He had one mode, fight."

"Seems like he is still in that mode." I scoff, and Marcos shakes his head.

"No, trust me. This one is different," he mutters.

I say nothing, honestly unsure of what to say now that Hayes is in my thoughts, confusing me and angering me all without being around. Marcos stands awkwardly for a moment before he huffs out a sigh. "Well, if you are sure you are okay out here, I will head back then." He says.

I can tell he wants to stay, maybe because he wants to be around me or maybe because he still feels I am not up to the task, but what I want is to be left alone.

"See you in the morning." I say, giving him a tight smile.

"Actually... Do you mind if I just sit with you for a little longer?" He asks. I narrow my eyes.

"Why?" I ask him and he chuckles.

"It's completely innocent, I promise. I just find it peaceful being around you. Or maybe it's being around someone new. I promise I won't talk." He says, tossing his hands up.

"Fine." I roll my eyes. "But if you make a sound, I'm sending you back."

He makes a movement over his mouth like he is zipping his lips up and I smile at the cute little action. Then I look out into the distance and I swear I can see a figure watching

us and my heart lurches when I

realize just how similar the shape is to Tyler's.

I squeeze my eyes shut tight, and rub them, looking at the same blank spot where a body inhabited milliseconds earlier. Either I am going crazy or we are being followed, and I am not sure which one it is yet.

## Chapter 148

"So, where exactly are we headed first?" I ask the group as they move in silence in front of me. Nisha groans in annoyance, picking up her pace, Koda following along behind her like a love struck puppy. "Great, good talk." I mutter to myself. "She will come around eventually," Marcos says, popping up on my right. He gives me a gentle smile that makes my cheeks blush and I shake my head, hiding my grin. "I enjoyed spending time with you last night." I chuckle and nod. "Yeah, the silence was nice."

His eyes squint slightly and his mouth quirks up at the edges, the light sound of laughter tumbling freely from him like he is unaffected by his past. A pang of jealousy twinges in my chest and I look away, tucking a loose strand of hair behind my ear. "I was thinking more about the nice wrestling match." He winks and I bark out a laugh, giving him a shove as he leans away.

"Way to make it sound less like you getting your ass kicked and more like it was planned." I tease him.

"I mean, call it what you want. I'm happy to do it again whenever you'd like."

Oh, Marcos is a flirt. A damn good flirt, but for once, it feels nice to be seen for more than a history I had. Either with Tyler or Hayes.

"No relationships in the group." Hayes growls, a glare sharp enough it could puncture even a dragon's hide. My spine tingles as his scent hits my nostrils and I want to gnaw my heart out just to keep it from feeling anything for him. "Define relationships?" I say with a sarcastic lip twitch. "Because I'm not looking for a new mate, just maybe someone to pass the time until I inevitably die in battle."

It's a lie. I'm not looking for anyone or anything to help me pass the time. But the way Hayes' glare turns annoyed to homicidal is well worth the little lie. A little part of me feeds off seeing the emotions play across his face that he can't control. "Don't fuck around." He clarifies, trying to come off as intimidating, but all it does is thrill me all too much that he cares at all.

"What about just fucking? Is that okay?" I ask, sending a wink to Marcos, who clears his throat and scratches the back of his neck.

"Well damn, I wasn't expecting you to be that forward—"

"No. You can not fuck Marcos. Or Koda, or Dean, or Nisha." He says, his voice growing loud but not quite yelling yet.

"What about you then?" Marcos asks, a defiant look in his eyes as he stops and goes toe to toe with Hayes.

Hayes blinks slowly, his shoulders rolling back as he rises to his full height. He stands two inches taller than Marcos before he leans forward, his lips in a sneer.

"If she needs to fuck anyone, she can use her damn fingers and her imagination." He snaps out, but his eyes shift to me and I can see a look there that makes my eyebrows raise and my mouth go dry.

"Interesting." Marcos mutters, taking a step back, a mischievous grin on his lips. "So She is off limits, is that what you are saying?"

"Yes." he bites out before he seems to rear back. "I mean no. Just no sex among the crew."

"Other than Nisha, who can just freely crawl into anyone's tent she pleases?" Marcos challenges.

Bile burns at my throat, the jealousy twisting through my stomach painfully at the thought of Hayes with her.

"It's fine, Marcos." I say, clearing my throat of the acid and hurt. "No sex, fine."

I turn on my heels and walk off, realizing I set myself up for this pain in my chest. Where I aim to anger and annoy Hayes, I only end up causing myself more pain in the long run.

The pain of hating myself for thinking of someone other than Tyler and the pain of hating Hayes for not feeling the bond and the usual self hatred for not being strong enough to forgo any of it.

I catch up to Dean, who looks mildly surprised to see me at his side. Neither of us say anything. Why would we when we have nothing to discuss? But I must admit, the lack of hostility and flirtatious looks is a relief I didn't think I would find.

Marcos storms past us, muttering curses under his breath, and Dean looks at me curiously. I shrug and shake my head, telling him I have no idea what it's about either, and he turns to look back. I follow his gaze, glimpsing an angry-looking Hayes, hands stuffed in his pockets as he looks around.

I look back forward before he has the chance to catch me peeking at him. Dean then lets out a heavy sigh and gives me a sympathetic look before he increases his walking speed.

My eyes grow large in shock, trying

to keep up as he clearly tries to ditch

me. Panic rises when it dawns on

me that there must have been some silent eye communication between Hayes and Dean to make him take off and look like he wanted to

apologize like that.

"Kyra." Hayes says, his voice deep and demanding, causing my body to react in a way that makes my eyes water.

I don't want this pull, this bond. It

feels like I am cheating on Tyler, on our family, that I was too weak to keep together. It takes me further from their memory with every little tug. Every scent, every look pulls the line more taut, and it makes it so much harder to be rational. I can't be alone with Hayes. I don't want to be.

"What?" I say, refusing to look at him. His eyes burn into the side of my head, daring me to look, but instead, I look in the opposite direction. "Look at me," He says, his words soft, almost pleading. I turn my head, giving him my best uninterested scowl.

"What do you need, Hayes?" I ask him.

"I need to make sure you understand my order." He says, his lips pressing together tightly, like he has to know I won't misbehave.

"Yes, Hayes. I won't fuck anyone in our crew." I roll my eyes. "So happy to know you think so highly of me."

"You were the one that was discussing it, Kyra. Not me." His voice is accusatory.

"Yep," I say, popping the 'p' just to illustrate my annoyance with him.

"Look," He sighs heavily, dragging his hand through his hair and groaning. "I am sorry for how things ended in our friendship." "Why do you do this?" I ask him, unable to hide the shock I feel so deeply.

"Do what?" he asks, confused.

"Act like a dick and then, for a tiny moment, the old you breaks through. The Hayes that cares and feels something other than anger."

"I guess it's just you," He sighs. "Being around you always made me feel like I could be myself."

"Oh? So you shattered that friendship for what reason?" I say, crossing my arms over my chest as I stop walking, forcing him to look at me.

"You left." He says flatly. I roll my eyes and laugh dryly.

"And how long did it take you to notice that I left?" I ask him. "Or did you forget that the very day after I told you how I felt, you ignored me, no matter how hard I tried to talk to you?"

"You are being dramatic." He scoffs. My eyes grow wide, my mouth falling open in disbelief.

"Oh really? Mister mopey, homicidal ex-beta is going to lecture me on being dramatic?"

"You shouldn't have just left." He says, ignoring my jab.

"Did you even notice?" I ask again, narrowing my eyes. He looks away, guilt coloring the unmarked side of his handsome face. My stomach falls when I realize maybe I don't want to know this answer. "I noticed." He whispers.

"When?" I ask. This time my voice is softer as I try to keep from breaking. That day, thought him telling me he would never love me, then ignoring me broke my heart. But knowing he didn't even realize I had left until days after I was gone is

crushing.

"I went to your house on your birthday to apologize. I noticed you stopped trying to talk to me, so I went to check on you and-"

The air in the forest feels as if it's been sucked out like a vacuum seal in space. My birthday?! I left five weeks before my birthday.

"Noted." I clip out, unable to voice how much it hurts. Unwilling to admit to him and myself that it took him just over a month to notice I was completely gone. Not only was my love for him one sided, but apparently so was our friendship. "Hayes!" Nisha calls out, sprinting toward us. "We may have something, a camp for one person and what looks like a nest." Search the find novels website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

## Chapter 149

\*Hayes\*

I squat down next to the ash where a fire had been, placing my hand above it to feel for heat. With my good arm, I reach out, my fingers digging into the cold ash as I lift it and let it fall. I frown at the soot, my eyes scanning the rest of the area, what glimmer of excitement! "Do you think it was him?" Dean asks, coming up behind me, watching my every move as if he will be clued into what might be going through my head.

had leaches from me. Could it be him? Was the bastard this fucking close, and we missed him?

How the fuck should I know if it was truly Ezra? Other than the weird ass little nest next to a body sized patch of pressed leaves, I can't definitively say that it was or wasn't him or not. Now, do I believe it was him? Yes. But again, that pesky little thing called proof seems to elude me more often than not.

"Hard to say." I mutter, exhaling my disappointment, only to breathe in curiosity when I see Kyra tilting her head in total silence and surveying the area.

"Shouldn't she be the one sticking her hands in the dirt and shit? Trying to smell it or something?" Nisha asks. I shift my eyes toward her, watching her glare at Kyra, who does nothing but look like she is staring off into space.

"I don't need to stick my hand in dirt to know it's been four days since they were here." Kyra looks at us, her face unreadable as she saunters to the center of the small camp, her body coming within inches of mine before she turns and points at the grass.

"The leaves, though slightly pressed, are rising off the ground. New life is growing beneath them, meaning there has not been pressure on it in days. The ash isn't loose or easily disturbed, meaning it got wet. Not just a drizzling of a canteen on it, but a day or two worth of rain and then a day or two of solid dry weather." She pauses.

"There were storms ahead of our departure," Marcos says with a sly grin as he watches Kyra with ogling eyes I want to gouge out.

"What? Worried you can't track him with that much time between now and then?" Nisha goads.

Kyra remains calm, stepping up to the little nest before she kneels down and reaches in it, her hand touching everything and her fingers gently caressing the little bed. Then she lifts three different leaves to her nose, before she places two back.

After a second she turns to her left, searching the bedding for others, and repeats the process only to frown and sniff the one in her hand again. She sneezes and then her body shakes as she stands abruptly and takes three steps back. Kyra's eyes water, tears streaming down her cheeks as she groans and rubs her face with her hands, leaf still in her grip.

"I need water." She hisses, her arm extending out in search of help. "Now!"

My hand fumbles to find my canteen as I move to her side, trying like hell to get the cap off, but my fingers don't do what I tell them, my dumb nerves slowing me down as Marcos gently steps in with his water, open and ready to help her. "Lean your head back," he says, cupping the back of her head with one hand. His voice too soft, too nice.

He never speaks to any of us like that. Hell majority of the time he is just as grumpy and scowl-y as the rest of us. But I know it's attraction to her, his inability to not seize any opportunity to be close to her no matter what. It is wildly inappropriate. "Ezrah knows what he is doing," Kyra grits out, Marcos' hands cup her face next as his water jug falls to his waist on its string. His uniformed, unburned and unmangled thumbs brush her eyes gently, tenderly rubbing along her freckles and cheeks. I swallow the rise of annoyance and anger in my throat, looking away, placing my hands on my hips. It is impossible to watch him treat her so gingerly when I can't. Not that I want to, but still. His overbearing attachment to her grates on my nerves. "Can you open your eyes?" Marcos asks, and a tiny prickle of panic makes me look at her. Is she seriously injured?

"No, it burns," she whispers, her voice croaking as she tries to mask the pain. Marcos looks down at her, his face mere inches from Kyra's, as he tries to glimpse her face up close. He purses his lips, gently blowing on her eyelids. "What does blowing on her eyelids do?" I scoff, but he ignores me.

"I think he sprinkled the area with something to mask his scent." Kyra says, wincing as she pulls away from Marcos.

"Oh, how convenient." Nisha gripes and I finally look at the jealous werewolf, tired of her constant shitty attitude toward Kyra.

"Nisha, shut the fuck up." I demand.

Her eyes go wide in surprise as I stare her down. A flicker of disappointment fades into embarrassment as she clears her throat and looks away. She finds Koda, and like a dog with its tail between its legs, she hurries to his side, tucking into him. "I'm fine." Kyra says, the relief in her voice clear as she blinks, her eyes watering profusely. "It feels like I ran into a wall of pepper spray but, I don't think there is any real damage."

"What else do you need to do before we leave this site?" I ask her.

"Nothing." She shrugs. Search the Findnovel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

My brows pull together in doubt and I can sense I am not the only one surprised by her statement.

"Forgive me for asking this but, don't you need to look around more?" Marcos asks, out of curiosity.

Kyra gives a halfhearted chuckle as she wipes at her tear covered cheeks, her eyes red and puffy and yet...yet I can't seem to bring myself to look away from her.

"He is covering his tracks well. Which means any other clues are gone. The fact that he has something and lays it over the areas he has been makes me inclined to think he assumes you have trackers." She explains.

"I mean, now we do." Koda says flatly. "But what good are you if he is able to thwart your so-called abilities?"

Nisha smiles up at him, rewarding Koda for his offensive words with a soft hum and a flirty gaze.

"A regular tracker would be useless." She says with a frown.

"Ah, but you aren't a regular tracker," Marcos says with a wink, and she gives him a tight-lipped smile.

"I hate to sound overconfident, but you are right. I am not your average tracker." She says, looking around. "Tyler was the best tracker, not because of his nose or his eyes. But his ability to feel the area."

"And you are...feeling...the area?" Dean asks, his lips tilted down, and a brow popped in question.

She chuckles and then shrugs.

"I am assessing, Dean." She explains. "It's not about what I see but what I DON'T see that I am taking in,"

"And what is it you don't see?" I ask, curious enough to speak up.

"I don't see anything left behind, and

he left a little gift for your tracker, which means we are far enough behind him that he is comfortable and not a rush. But that also means that he is beginning to feel some pressure as he is hiding his scent. So congratulations on selecting the correct path until now. Dumb luck is still luck, I suppose."

My lip twitches at the corners, the faintest of smiles emerging.

"How are you so sure it's Ezra, though, and not someone else? And how do we know we are going in the right direction, moving forward?" Dean asks, curious.



Kyra holds up the leaf in her hand,

twisting its stem as it goes in quick circles between her fingers. A beautiful smile grows wider on her lips until she meets my eyes, a fire burning in them like I have never seen in her before.

"This leaf was missed. What ever he placed around, he missed this tiny little thing," she says brightly. "I can smell the scent of the egg. Whatever is inside of that egg is something I have never smelled before, not quite dragon, not quite something else."

"So she uses her nose too," Nisha mutters. I whip a glare at her and she turns away into Koda's chest.

"Ezrah doesn't realize that the egg already has a scent." Kyra says with a winning smile. "So we aren't tracking him anymore. We are tracking the egg."

My mouth goes dry as I realize all those cries to the heavens, all those angered ranting sessions begging for reprieve or some direction, have just been answered.

All in the shape of a beautiful, fiery-haired ex-best friend. And I'm not sure if I should thank the heavens or curse them because as much as I want to die, I don't think I want her to be around when it happens.

## Chapter 150

"So what now? Can you actually smell which way he went now?" Nisha asks, for once not in a rude tone but in one of confusion. "Now we wait for Kyra to tell us where to go." I say, meeting her surprised eyes. "You do know where we go from here, right?"

Her bottom lip slips in between her teeth, her slender fingers being wrung by her other hand as she slowly nods. Everyone is watching her and I realize our comments combined with our heavy, expectant gaze must make her feel uncomfortable. I take a step forward, not sure why I feel compelled to calm her, but I do, as I open my mouth to tell her it is okay to take time to process.

Marcos, however, steps up to her side, his arm slipping around her shoulder in a gentle, protective manner. I look away, my tongue gliding over my teeth as I try to keep the strange twisting in my gut away. Marcos isn't being sexual in any way, but fuck does it bother me when he touches her.

"How about we give her some time to think and look around some more?" He offers.

"Time?" Koda scoffs. "More time when we are so close?"

"I agree with Koda," Nisha chimes in. "If we are finally on his tail, we need to keep moving, catch up to him. We could end this within a week."

"The rest of you travel southeast. Kyra, I want to speak with you alone." I say, commanding her attention. My anger quells under her curious gaze and her head tilts slightly to the side like it always has. If I weren't trying too hard to keep a straight face, I would almost smile at the little reminder of her before the world went to shit between us.

"What?" she asks, crossing her arms over her chest, a quick gaze up at Marcos that makes my heart skip a beat before he gives her a tight smile and follows along with the others. Kyra looks almost more comfortable with his arms removed and it gives me such a sick form of satisfaction.

"You mentioned there is nothing left to be done here," I remind her and she nods. "So I must ask you now, in your opinion, tracker, which way do you suggest we head in?"

She blinks, walking directly toward me. Kyra's steps are slow and measured, her eyes focusing on me. It's not until she is nearly pressed against me that she stops, my stare rivaling hers as she reaches up, the heat of her fingers brushing over my cheek as she reaches up and retrieves an item from behind me.

I don't know how it happens, or why my body responds this way, but I lean toward her, my very soul just needing this closeness, craving it for these years as I lower my head. My cheek presses to hers.

The softness of her skin does not go unnoticed as something moves inside of me. Maybe it's the ice around my heart or the rock I have my soul buried under, but it moves, proving that maybe there is life still there.

She gasps, jumping back, her hand on her cheek and eyes focused not on mine, but on my cheek. The scar that had touched her perfect, unblemished skin freckled skin. For a minute, I think it was the shock of our closeness until she clutches her stomach and turns away quickly like she might vomit.

Embarrassment rolls through me, snowballing into a burning disappointment. My lycan whines in emotional pain as I clear my throat and stick my hands in my pocket, trying to not let her know she has hurt me. Why the fuck did I do that? Why did I feel compelled to just... touch her...be closer to her when I know we hate each other?

But I know that is a lie. I have never hated her. How could I? The Kyra I remember was bold and daring but she was kind and always put everyone else's needs before her own. I didn't just love her as a friend.

I wanted her.

In every way, a beta should want his mate. I wanted Kyra. I wanted her hand in mine, her lips on my lips, and I wanted her soul entwined in mine. It had nothing to do with the desire to wrap my hands in those fiery red locks of hair and tilt her head back as I leave a barrage of tender kisses up and down her most sensitive skin. I wanted her heart, her soul, her smile every day and to memorize the freckles on her cheeks.

But then I saw everyone with their mate. I watched all of them fall out of love with the people they thought they wanted because of a bond, and I knew it would break her. The mate bond is a gift to those who have never loved, and a stab to those who have.

"I am sorry," I rasp out, clearing my throat. "There was a rock I was standing on. I lost my footing."

"No, I should have told you I saw something in the leaves behind you." She says, her eyes still turned away from me as she kneads her stomach and covers her mouth.

I retract my damaged hand, looking regrettably at the way my flesh twists and shimmers around the tendons and clings to the untainted muscles. Can I really blame her for her reaction? My hand is the least disgusting part of my burns. The side of my face looks as if I have been chewed up and spat out back out for being ill tasting.

"What did you find?" I ask, turning my back to her, trying to calm my anxious, beating chest and force the hurt from her reaction down.

"The leaves match the ones used for the bedding." She whispers. "Which means he either stood over here or climbed the tree. I was hoping I would be able to see a section where a lot of leaves were missing."

Kyra clears her throat and steps up next to me, but I notice she stands on my good side. I can't lie and say that her action doesn't sting a little, but instead of frowning, I find myself smiling. What I need when I am around Kyra is a solid reminder of what I am doing here. And knowing how much I disgust her, well, it makes it easier. Kind of.

"Then you should have a look up in the tree." I say, taking a few steps back.

"No," she shakes her head.

"I thought..." I say, furrowing my brows, my partially burned forehead creasing.

"I can see the section from here," she points up. But I am already too far from her to notice. "He clipped off a whole branch. I guess he used the wood to burn. Though it would have been green would, so maybe he didn't..."

She drones off, her words growing more quiet as she circles the tree and talks to herself. I watch as she glides over the rest of the area, moving back to the ashes and

then placing her hands on her hips in confusion. It's adorable how her nose scrunches or she chews the inside of her cheek in thought before moving to another spot again.

After a few minutes, she seems to finally stand still, her head moving side to side as she scans around some more with a frown. Then she lifts one of her hands and drags it through her hair, pulling it from its ponytail. Red locks flutter down her shoulders and over her back midway as she shakes it out and groans.

I clear my throat and she freezes, turning to look over her shoulder slowly. A smirk crosses my lips as her cheeks blush and she quickly lifts both hands, tying her hair up in a quick tight bun. "You forgot I was here, I assume?" I ask her and she nods.

"Sorry, I got caught up." She admits.

"And you said there was nothing else to look for here." I tease her as she frowns.

"There isn't," she admits. "But I want to commit this enough to memory to recall things that are a little strange and see if we find them again."

"So which way should we head, then?" I ask her and she looks away.

"I don't know, Hayes." she exhales, sounding defeated. "This is his previous camp. Of that I am certain, and it's around four days old. But I can't find any indication of what way he went."

"Then we travel south east for the time being and you are on alert for anything, and I mean anything you pick up." I tell her, turning and walking the way I sent the others.

She doesn't say anything, but after a minute her footsteps speed up and she lands next to me, matching my pace. I notice her attention keeps sliding up in my direction so I heave out an annoyed sigh.

"What?" I ask her and she snaps her gaze forward.

"Nothing." She says and I frown.

Kyra walks on my bad side, my slight limp tossing more to her side with each step, so I move around her, shifting her to my good side, and she looks at me curiously. "Why did you just switch sides?" She asks, confused.

"I did you a favor. Just like I will do when I tell everyone you agree with our choice of travel direction." I exhale, trying to avoid the topic.

"A favor? By switching sides with me?" She asks skeptically.

"Yes, so you don't get grossed out." I bite out and she goes rigid.

"Because of your face." She says matter of the fact and it fucking cuts right into my heart.

"Yes, now shut up and walk. We need to catch up." I grumble, picking up speed, suddenly feeling like I might suffocate in her presence.

"Thank you," she whispers from behind me. "For trying to make me more comfortable."

I snort a laugh. "It's a tall order when you are stuck with me. But if it gets us to Ezra faster, then I can be a gentleman from time to time." Even if it just means making sure she doesn't have to look at my fucked up face.

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