

Traded To The Lycan King by MG Wattsons

Chapter 169

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Hayes

Dean frowns, a heavy sigh escaping him as he places his hands on his hips and weighs what I have told him.

"And you think it's a good idea?" He asks, finally looking up.

"No, but I think it's our best option." I admit. "Is it ideal? No, not at all, but I'm trusting my instincts here."

He smirks, his cheek dimpling as he tries to hold back a chuckle.

"Forgive me for saying this, Hayes, but since I have known you, all your instincts have done is find us in fights, almost dying."

"That was anger. This is logic. It's obvious that what we have been doing isn't working, so we need to pivot. Find a better angle, a better plan, and I think this is the way to go." I admit. "Look, I know trust is hard past a certain extent with me. But if you could just afford me a little grace here, it would help—"

"I trust you." He says, cutting me off, the skin around his eyes wrinkling as his brows furrow. "What I need to know is that you can trust yourself."

My lips press together, and I look away, my gaze drifting to Kyra where she stands and stretches as the others wake everyone up. Can I trust myself when I don't even know what the hell to do about her? About this disgusting spring of hope flowing in my gut? I want her; I want a life with her, all the while knowing I deserve no such thing and I can't ever have it.

"That will be something I have to figure out along the way."

"Hmm," Dean mulls in thought, and I cross my arms over my chest, watching him.

"Hmm what?" I ask, and he looks at the others.

"You should at least take Marcos with you." He exhales. "Four is better than one."

"Marcos is a great fighter, but he will only cause tension. We already have tons of that with taking the dragon with us."

"Yo! You guys ready?" Koda hollers over to us. I give Dean a firm nod and he gives me a weak smile.

"Well, I guess if all goes well, we will see you soon enough." He reaches out for my hand as I slap mine into his, seizing it in a firm grip.

"You will see me soon. Just make sure you stick to the plan, okay? No letting people wander off and search for us." I say firmly. "Marcos will not follow you guys."

"Good. When you see my brother..." I pause, swallowing the roughness in my throat, "Tell him I hope to see him soon."

His eyes widen, but instead of asking questions, he nods his head.

"Sure thing."

I reach down near my feet, swooping up two bags, mine and the one I prepared for Kyra. As I stride over to her, my heart thuds like a drum before going into war. I am putting my faith in her and her dragon friend to find Ezra and get what we need. Knowing what I know now, I realize that the mission of just simply finding the egg is truly just the beginning of the journey.

"You two come with me." I say, walking past them and into the woods.

Dean calls the others with him, the two of us agreeing it would be much faster with a lot less bitching if we just separate and explain to our group the plan. Kyra and Teiran don't utter a word, the two just following until we have walked far enough that Kyra clearly grows curious as she slides up next to me. My lip twitches up into a soft smile, a weird sense of excitement growing in my stomach.

"Yes?" I say, feigning annoyance.

"Just curious what the plan is." She shrugs like she isn't interested.

"We walk this way until you pick up a scent or see something." I shrug and she cranes her head to look at me.

"And the others are hanging out at camp?" She asks, her eyes narrowing as she picks on the fact I am not being exactly forthcoming with all the information I have.

I come to a stop, turning to face her as Teiran walks up to us.

"We will find Ezra on our own from

now on. The others have gone to inform Merikh and Colette of who we have found and hopefully semet what they think of our new..parasite." I say, looking right at him.

Teiran seems amused by my comment, but he says nothing, only nodding his understanding.

"You think that all of us will be able to take on Ezra?" She asks, shocked.

"No. I think Teiran and I will be able to take him on while you get the egg."

She scoffs, looking away before she looks at the ground, her tongue pressing against her inner cheek as she tries to find patience.

"You want me to steal the egg and run off and leave you two to fight a Fae?"

"I have fought many Fae." Teiran says, his tone flat and unoffended.

"See? Between the two of us, one has fought fae before. It will be fine." I tease her and she glares at me, then her tongue darts out and licks her lip, wetting the plump rosy flesh. My lycan stirs, wanting to come forward and take her and yank her to me and claim her. But that's not something we will do, or can do.

"Hah, Hah." She barks out a fake laugh. "So happy you found a sense of humor now."

"You are the one who wanted to split up. This was kind of your idea if you think about it."

"Great. You get yourself killed and I get the blame for it. How quant for me." She mutters, stalking off.

"How does this plan mean he will die?" Teiran asks, giving me a bemused look before following after her.

"I need quiet, Teiran, if I am supposed to be finding a trail." She hollers up to the sky, so she doesn't have to look at us.

"Probably shouldn't be yelling then." I call out to her and I hear her grunt before she shoots me an annoyed scowl.

"I liked you better when you were mean." She hisses, then turns around, stepping to the left and into the trees.

"She said she didn't get much sleep last night. I assume that is where this temper comes from," Terian says, his eyes wide, looking a little shocked by her change in mood. "That and she is hungry. And thirsty." I exhale.

"Mmm, the trifacta." He muses. "Do we have anything for her?"

"Yes. I do." I say, holding up the spare bag I packed especially for her.

"Do you plan to give it to her?" He asks, quirking a brow. "Or are you going to wait for her to realize she needs a snack?"

I snort, shouldering both straps to our bags and pat them gently with a grin on my face.

"She's a big girl. She can tell us when she is hungry or needs a drink." Then I walk with him chuckling behind me.

"One would think you two are in love." Teiran says more to himself than to me, so I don't respond. I don't dare hope to think love can exist between Kyra and me again.

This mate bond is here, thriving and

Her

pulling me in but I know all too well that a mate bond isn't instant love. That is part of my pain over Leandra. Knowing her, wanting her but yet having the chance to truly love the way she deserved. And giving that opportunity to anyone else... it feels like a dishonor to her memory.

"Hey!" Kyra hisses under her breath, breaking through my inner thoughts, snapping her fingers frantically. "Get over here. I found blood."

Chapter 170

"He is baiting us." Teiran gruffs, looking around for something more than the few droplets that linger on the ground.

"Or it's someone else." I mutter, focused on the way the blood seems different. Pinker, almost like paint from the store in shades lighter than blood red.

"Both of you are wrong," Kyra murmurs in thought, scooping up a leaf with some of it on it as she brings it closer to her nose and sniffs.

"And what makes you think that?" Teiran asks, walking over to her.

"There is fur in it," she explains, but he huffs in disagreement.

"The fur could have happened before or after the blood was here." He parries.

Kyra shrugs, her smooth locks falling over her shoulder and swinging toward her face as she looks carefully at what's in her hand.

"I suppose that could be true, too. But this blood smells like a deer.

"Then why is it pink?" He frowns and I grin. It feels nice to know a little more about this than others.

"It's from the lungs. It's more oxygenated and therefore looks more pink than red. Do you not hunt deer very often?"

Teiran looks at me with a blank stare, "We don't hunt our deer the same way you do."

"Right," I mumble, remembering he is a big ass dragon under that human skin. He probably doesn't have to chase and tackle, but does more swooping and swallowing.

"Are you sure it is a deer?" He asks, as Kyra stands and walks further from us.

We follow her, watching as she processes everything in her head, her eyes focused and her mind unable to hear anything we are saying now. Until she stops and places her hands on her hips.

"I am positive." She says, looking back at us and then nodding forward to where a dead deer hangs, partially butchered.

"Ezrah?" I ask, moving closer, looking at the jagged cuts closer.

"Most likely," Kyra says.

"Well, at least we can salvage what he left." Teiran says, moving closer and proceeding to process the rest of the deer.

I can see Kyra already moving forward in her head, her eyes scanning the different ways Ezrah could have potentially gone. She moves forward, passing the deer and stepping into a tiny clearing where she places her hands on her hips and sucks in her bottom lip, chewing on it intensely.

I want to follow her, like a shadow forever attached to her but always beneath her, but it feels somehow invasive to see her like this, in a way I have never known her to be.

This is the version Tyler knew, the version he helped to shape, and that she loves so much. It feels wrong to admire her for it and yet...her focus is adorable and her commitment admirable.

"You follow her and see what else you two may find, then come back for me." Teiran says from behind me. "There is enough meat here that we can turn it into jerky and have supplies for some time."

"Are you sure?" I ask him and he snorts a laugh.

"I have been out here on my own for a long time." He responds and I smirk.

"I mean, are you sure you know what you are doing? Because it looks to me like you are cutting that deer like a novice." I wince as he just takes chunks out of the veal.

"Meat is meat, no matter how it is cut." He says, looking mildly confused. "Now go before she leaves you."

His eyes look at where Kyra was moments before, but now there is nothing but a hint of her scent left behind. I follow it, weaving through trees until I see her. Her fingers touch various trees before she swoops down, touching the mossy ground. Then she drops to her knees and listens to the ground, popping up with a disappointed frown.

I see it before she does, the quick movement under the trees on the opposite side. My eyes stuck on the thing as it darts around, before stopping and standing at the edge of the light that shines through the trees.

I stride to Kyra, coming up next to her, my hand sliding up her lower back to alert her to my presence. She shakes her head out of a daze, then blinks at me, a curious shimmer in her eyes.

"We have an audience." I whisper to her, only for there to be a chuckle that echoes through the trees.

"It's not Ezra." She tells me, her head tilting to the side.

"No, it's not." I agree.

"You look scared." A feminine voice calls out.

That draws a cocky smile from me as I chuckle low in my chest.

"You misinterpret my wariness for fear. I don't often get scared, and most certainly not when it is someone of your kind." I tell her, which makes Kyra look up at me curiously.

"Was that you who killed the deer?" I ask, though have the feeling this will offend the wood fae. She steps forward, her blond hair reflecting the sun with flowers strung throughout it. Her cheeks are red with fury as she clenches her fist.

"I would never do such a thing." She hisses. "That bastard did it, so I scared him off."

"What bastard?" Kyra asks, taking a step closer. "Can you tell me which way he went?"

"Do you know him?" The blonde elf narrows her eyes, her teeth grinding together. I can see the trees as they move, almost quivering with her in her growing anger.

"We are hunting him." I say, placing my hands up. "He is our enemy and the reason the war has not ended."

"The war?" She blinks. "What war?"

"The one with the dragons and the lycans..." Kyra says, confused, as she slides a weird look at me.

Her forehead wrinkles and her nose crinkles. "Is that why there are so many of them around? Of those big men?"

"You have seen a lot around?" I ask her. Shit, if she has seen a lot, then there is a chance we will find ourselves fighting more of them. Which will slow us down and likely mean injuries in some way for all of us. "Well, in the past year, I have. And just in the last three days I saw a huge group and then a little bit ago-"

"Where did the man who killed the deer go?" Kyra asks, moving back to the original subject.

"You mean the messenger fae?" She asks, crossing her arms over her chest. "I don't understand why he had to kill an innocent animal. He has the speed to get to any realm he needs for food. Stupid, selfish messengers."

"Which way did he go?" She nearly shouts, making the girl jolt and blink.

"I apologize for her tone," I say sweetly, flashing her a bright smile. "We have been tracking him for some time."

I shoot Kyra a warning look as she rolls her eyes, clearly unrelenting in her hunt for Ezra.

"He went that way. She says pointing over her shoulder, but then he cut to the west, I lost him there."

"Shit." Kyra mutters, looking back. "We should go get Teiran quickly and head that way. I don't want to lose him anymore than we have."

"Who is Teiran?" The girl asks, suddenly looking a little nervous.

"Why?" I ask her, sensing something is wrong in the change in her demeanor.

"Is he the one with my friend? Cutting away at her dead carcass?" She asks sweetly and I watch Kyra's face grow white.

"What the hell did you do to him?" She hisses, turning and sprinting back toward where we left him.

"Shit," I mutter, turning and following along behind her.

"Teiran!" she screams, breaking through branches that claw and yank at her loose hair. "TEIRAN!"

No one answers as we grow closer. Kyra doesn't spare me a glance as she comes back to where the deer had been. The meat that Teiran had cut off lay on the ground next to his bag as I spin in a circle looking for him. "I punished him." The wood fae says from behind us, coming to a halt.

"Where is he?" I ask her, anger rising. She cowers under my rage and points up to the top of a tree where an unconscious Teiran hangs with a branch through his shoulder, blood dripping down his hanging body.

The image hits me in the gut, a sick reminder of what happened to Leandra, the way she was tortured, images of trees erupting through her chest as she was skewered onto the branches.

I fall to my knees, bile rising as I find

myself stuck in the memory, unable to separate reality from this nightmare. It feels like the world is caving in, my lungs burning and my heart about to explode as Kyra argues with the woman and slip further into the darkness.