

# Traded To The Lycan King by MG Wattsons

## Chapter 171

\*Kyra\*

"Oh fuck. No, no, no!" Hayes mutters behind me as I rush toward Teiran. My legs feel weak and my arms shaky as I try to climb the tree to get him down.

"Leave him!" The wood fae screams, but I ignore her. What she doesn't know is that once I am done getting Teiran freed, I am going to tear her throat out. "I said to leave him!"

"You can go get fucked, you tree humper!" I growl at her. She scoffs and then chuckles, breaking into a manic laugh.

The branches start to bend and twist under me, my feet losing their footing as I fall, crashing into the ground with bruising force. Pain radiates up my thigh as I shove off the ground, sprinting toward Teiran, reaching up and swinging off the lowest branches, launching myself up as I grip the next one.

Teiran groans, turning his head to look at me as he tries to breathe. He is in rough shape, and if I don't get him down soon, he won't heal the right way. Shit. I grit my teeth, jumping onto a branch that sways out, my fingers gripping the moving bark. As I try to use it to move myself closer.

Instead, it consumes my hand, growing around it and gripping me tight as my fingers crunch.

"Agh!" I grit out, as something wraps around my ankle and pulls on me. Twisting me upside down as I try to fight against the restraints.

"Hayes!" I cry out, looking for him to see if he, too, is trapped. Instead, I am shocked to see him on his hands and knees, struggling to breathe. The wood Fae must have hurt him somehow and my heart aches knowing he is in pain. "If you hurt him, I swear I will—" "Why would I hurt him?" She asks innocently, tilting her head as she looks at him. "I don't want to hurt you, but you insist on fighting me for that man's punishment."

My brows furrow in confusion, my eyes stuck on Hayes as he seems to have some sort of meltdown. He groans, holding his head as he grimaces, His eyes unfocused as if he is lost. My eyes slide to Teiran, who continues to bleed from the branch through his shoulder. "What the fuck do you want?" I grit out. She frowns, shaking her head as if she is a parent disappointed in her child.

"Did we not already discuss this?" She asks, titling her head.

"Yes! We told you we didn't fucking do it!" I screech.

"But you planned to eat her." She says low, her eyes growing dark and her lip sneering. "Leaving nothing left for me to return to the earth."

"I wished only to honor her death by making use of her instead of letting her go to waste." Teiran says, barely audible.

"That doesn't make sense." She scoffs, throwing her hands up. "Both your kinds just kill, and maim and devour. All you do is fight, mate, and kill."

I cry out in pain as the branches tighten over my ankle and hand, my fingers snapping as my muscles quiver and I try to fight the tears. This is why I hate the Fae. All of them are so high and mighty thinking since they live so long, they have a better understanding of life. "No," Hayes mutters, pushing back onto his knees, his eyes finding me, but he isn't in the present. I can see the ache in him, the way he is locked in the past, in a memory of what has happened. Hayes is having a mental breakdown, a trauma response.

"You need to let me down," I whisper, watching the pain in his eyes turn to murder as he slowly rises to his feet.

Hayes is not there as his lycan takes over, his body creaking and cracking with violent force as he lowers his chin and growls at her. I watch the fear in her eyes as her mouth falls open. Fae are strong with magic, but like us, they grow tired from overuse, growing weaker with each time they do too much. And she has done too much.

"Let us down now, or he will kill you." I hiss as she takes a step back.

Hayes lunges forward, letting out a feral howl as she drops to the ground, her hands sinking into the dirt as roots rise and twist around her, creating a barrier just as Hayes tears into her. He snaps his teeth, his claws striking all over, bark flying and green fresh roots exposed.

Ever so gently, I am released along with Teiran. The moment my feet touch the ground, I rush to Hayes in order to stop him. As much of an ill-informed brat as this fae is, she will be useful in trying to locate Ezra. Or even in immobilizing him. "Kyra, don't." Teiran whispers, his eyes filled with concern as he sits on the ground gripping his bleeding shoulder.

"Hayes," I whisper, clutching my injured hand to my stomach as I reach out to him.

I hesitate for a moment as fear comes over me. What if he doesn't recognize me? What if he thinks I am the enemy, or he is in such a rage he can't be controlled? Just as I

reach out again, my fingers shaking, someone grabs me from behind and pulls me away. "Hayes will kill you. He is out of his mind," Teiran growls, his eyes dark as he looks down at me, something undistinguishable in them as he holds onto me.

"He won't," I say, exhaling. "Just trust me, okay?"

"It isn't trust in you I lack." He says,

taking us a few steps back as Hayes rears his head back and roars, his hand breaking through the roots as the woman shrieks in fear. "He is not in his right mind. Hell, I don't even think he is in our year at the moment."

"His mate was murdered this way." I whisper. "He couldn't save her, so I have to save him from this memory,"

"Let me try. I can hold him down until he comes back to us. In my dragon form-"

"He is my mate, Teiran," I grit out. "Okay? We are second chance mates, so I am the only one who can help him."

He frowns and shakes his head. "Or the only one who can make it worse."

But I step away from him,

determined to stop this. It has nothing to do with the Fae at this point. Right now, I need to rescue Hayes from the place in his mind. He seems to be trapped. No one should have to live through what he did, let alone twice. Even if it hurts me, I have to at least try to release him from the hell he must be currently living in.

I rush up to him, shoving at his side hard, pain burning up my arm from the force as he stumbles and shakes his head. He looks at me, his muzzle bloody and splintered as his chest heaves up and down.

"Come back to me, Hayes." I whisper, taking a cautious step toward him. He snorts, shaking his enormous head from side to side, stepping back. "It's just a memory, okay?"

He blinks, tilting his head as he looks at me before he charges me. My eyes fall closed as I brace for the impact, but he doesn't touch me. I can feel his heated breath on my face as he grunts and snorts like an angry bull.

The air around me swirls with his scent and I lift my hand, blindly feeling for his chest as I press my palm to it, feeling his erratic heartbeat.

"It's okay, I'm here," I whisper and I feel his muscles move beneath my hand, his body coming down to regular size as I open my eyes and look at him.

"I'm sorry," he says in a hoarse voice. "I'm sorry I let you die..."

My heart breaks, my hand reaching up for his cheek as my breathing stutters and my eyes water.

"It wasn't your fault. It never was." I breathe.

"Leandra," he murmurs, yanking me in for a hug, those sparks overwhelming me as I gasp in shock.

## Chapter 172

Hayes clutches to me, his body shaking as his hand drifts up to my hair, cupping the back of my head and tucking me to his shoulder. Teiran moves toward the ball of roots, rearing back his fist as he roars in anger and hammers through it. Wood splinters, green and brown, showering down on him as he heaves and reaches through, grabbing the fae by her neck. She dangles, scratching his hand as she feebly tries to escape.

"Let go!" She grits out, small whimsy branches trying to reach out to help her, but she is out of strength and energy.

"Teiran," I say, trying to move toward him, wanting to warn him not to kill the annoying woman, but Hayes tightens his already bone breaking grip. I squirm, pushing him back with great effort as he blinks and looks at me. His brows pull together and he tilts his head.

"Kyra?" His voice breaks as he comes back to reality, the look in his eyes killing me. I can see how disappointed he is in seeing my red hair and freckled face as he stumbles back, creating more space between us. I don't have time to watch him break my heart by accident as I rush over to Teiran.

"What do you want me to do with her?" He asks, still holding her up as she dangles, weak and helpless. Her defiant eyes meet mine as I press my lips together in thought.

"Knock her out and bring her along," I sigh, reaching up and rubbing my temple, trying to force all the emotions of what just happened away. I need a logical mind, not an emotional one.

"I won't help-" she says as Teiran grins, slamming his fist into her face. He drops her to the ground, then turns to look at me and Hayes.

"You going to deal with that now or later?" he asks. His words sound harsh, but his face tells me he is concerned. I get the feeling Teiran has had his own kind of heartbreak, even if they don't have mates like we do. Or at least not in the same way.

"I don't need to be dealt in one way or another." Hayes snaps, swinging his head in Teiran's direction. He looks drained, his back rising and falling as if he has been struggling in water for too long. And I suppose, in a sense, he has been drowning. "Do we need to rest here?" I ask him, and he scoffs before he breaks into a sardonic laugh.

"That feels like a yes," Teiran mutters, then he bends down, grabs the fae by her ankle, and drags her toward me. He releases her limp body at my feet and juts his chin to the denser forest behind me. "Guess I'll grab some wood."

As he walks away, he reaches into the bag over his shoulder and pulls out a pair of shorts, pressing them into Hayes' hands before he pats him on the shoulder and disappears. Hayes looks down at them before he silently slips them on and stands awkwardly where he is. "So you had a breakdown," I shrug, walking closer to him. "It happens."

He shakes his head and clears his throat.

"Not to me, not to lycans like me," He whispers, lifting his hand as if his hands are dirt as he observes them.

"And what makes you so special that you don't get to show emotions or have trauma?" I ask him, lifting a brow as I inch closer, trying to make my movements small and unnoticeable, but he notices. Lately, it seems, he is always noticing everything.

"I am trained to be mentally strong, to fight the mind a-and just deal with shit better." He snaps, reaching up as he drags his hands through his hair.

I exhale, my head falling to the side as I watch him try to understand that he is no different than anyone else. Training or no training, Hayes is just as human as the rest of us. He has always been transparent, easy to speak to and the person with wise and aged advice. And yet here he is after falling apart and he isn't sure how to put himself back together because he can't admit it even happened.

"The problem is you refusing to deal with it at all, Hayes." I say gently.

He nods, his hands finding his waist as he exhales deeply and drops his head back, looking at the tops of the trees and the daylight that seems to fade.

"It was easier," He murmurs before he clears his throat, "Well, I mean 'is' easier."

"Easier is usually the wrong route." I say with a smile and he chuckles, shaking his head, his dark hair shaking back and forth as he looks up at me.

"You sound like I used to." He says with a ghost of a smile lingering on his lips.

"Well, thank you. Old you was one of my favorite people to ever exist." I tell him truthfully.

Awkward silence falls over us as I wait for him to say something more, initiate conversation, or at least take a seat. Instead he just sits, groaning as he leans back onto his arms.

"Do you want to talk about it?" I ask him, taking a seat next to him.

He shakes his head no. As much as I

want to pry, to see what he

remembers, how he felt I know it's

never

not my place to do it. Sharing something this vulnerable takes a strength and willingness that can not be forced. SO I pull my knees to my chest and rest my chin on it, turning to look at him.

"What?" He scoffs and I shrug.

"Nothing, I'm just waiting for Teiran to come back."

"You have a thing for him, don't you?" He asks, massaging the palm of his left hand as he avoids looking at me.

"Would it bother you if I did?" I ask, and he scoffs.

"No, you can live your life how you want to." But the malice in his voice boils in my gut and causes me to grit my teeth, my jaw creaking.

"At least I want to live." I snap at him and he nods.

"If there was something worth living for, I might want to live." He shrugs, his eyes meeting mine for a second as I blush and look away, my eyes filling with tears I force to stay at bay.

"I'm not worth it?" I ask, swallowing roughly, "Are you Merikh and Colette not worth it or your adorable"

"No." he whispers, "You aren't worth it."

"But we are supposed to be mates." I say the words and my mouth feels dry, my throat aching as I force myself to hold his gaze. "You keep mentioning sparks. What do you plan to do when I do feel them?" Hayes sighs. "Protect you."

"And how will you do that?" I ask, my heart beating at the thought of him accepting me. How else would he protect me than to protect my heart and our soul tie?

"By rejecting you to save you from the inevitable pain. I will die sooner rather than later. There is nothing I want more than to leave this earth and make sure no one else is hurt because of me."

"And you won't give me the chance to change your mind?" I ask, rising to my knees and turning to face him.

"You can try all you want, Kyra. But my mind is set." He says, the lines on his face telling me he means every word.

"So if I kissed you right now...?" I ask, my voice raspy as I move closer, leaning in as he leans forward.

"I would not stop you, but you have been warned. You can not love me, and when you feel the bond too, you have to promise to accept my rejection." He says, his eyes watching my lips as I nibble on the side of my cheek, weighing his demands.

I am already lying to him. He is my mate. I felt it before he did, but I refuse to tell him that because I need to convince him there is more to life. That he needs to confront what is stuck in his head and deal with it. But I am not ready yet to hold myself back. So I pull away and heave a sigh.

"So you will never choose me? Even if we are fated?" I ask, swallowing my pride as a tear falls down my cheek.

"I have said all I need to say." He whispers, looking away. "Take from it what you will."

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## Chapter 173

\*Hayes\*

Nothing like a cold shoulder for an entire week of trudging through woods with no trail and the air thick with tension. And I don't mean just between Kyra and me, but everyone and this Fae chick who trudges along, threatening to string us up in the trees anytime she senses even a hint of annoyance with her. "Flora," Kyra says as pleasantly as she

can muster, but I can see the way her nose twitches, hating how fake she has to be. "I don't mean to be rude, but we do need to move faster than what you are going."

"How about I go as fast as I please? You don't like it, you can leave me." She shrugs, a smug smile on her lips.

I have walked in near silence since I last spoke with Kyra. Nothing to say more than offering food or water or the occasional grunt when addressing options for which way to head next. But if this sprite doesn't watch her mouth, I will slap the shit out of her.

"I guess you don't want revenge for your friend," Kyra mentions, shrugging as she takes her speed up a notch. For some reason, Flora's attachment to that dead deer is the only way to keep her in check. Which is not only weird, but annoying. "That's not fair," Flora mutters, glaring at Kyra's back as I come on her. She glances at me, a frown on her lips, before she smirks and bats her eyes at me flirtatiously.

"Something in your eye?" I ask her, and she scoffs.

"No."

"Then why are you looking at me like that?" I press my lips together, stopping as she steps in front and turns to face me. My arms cross over my chest as I heave a sigh, annoyed and curious all at the same time.

"So you two are mates?" she asks, her voice soft and I can hear how it changes, as if she is trying to be seductive, but she has been alone too long in the woods practicing on trees all day. I shake my head and chuckle, amused where I was once annoyed. "What does it matter to you?" I ask her.

"You just...you two don't act very in love." She reaches out, rubbing her fingers over my forearm.

"Is there a certain way people are supposed to act when they are in love?" I ask her, arching a brow when I notice Kyra and Teiran stop walking and watch us from far away. She tilts her head to the side, a smirk on her lips.

"They usually at least act like they like each other." She says and I bark out a laugh, my head falling back as I find great humor in her assessment.

Something comes over me and I meet Kyra's amused gaze and shoot her a wink. My hand reaches out and I cup Flora's cheek, my thumb stroking over her cheek before I lean forward. Her cheeks instantly heat and grow pink, her eyes wide in shock as her heart rate shoots up.

"Sometimes love is seen in other ways, like jealousy." I whisper, a fluttering in my chest as I hear angered footsteps stomping in our direction.



I hide my face at the side of her cheek just as she is ripped away. Kyra's eyes blaze in anger as she throws her fist back, her aim directed at Flora. Until it swings wide and she clobbers me in the shoulder. I take a step to the side, a scoff breaking from my lips as my hand flies up to touch where she struck me.

"What the hell was that for?" I hiss at her as she straightens herself and throws her hair back.

"I felt like hitting someone and you seemed like the better choice." She shrugs. Flora lets out a giggle, which snowballs into a fit of laughter as she looks between us and shakes her head from side to side.

"One day I wish to choose a mate who loves me unlike you two," she snickers.

"That is by far the rudest thing you have said yet," Kyra snaps out.

"Enough." I grunt, pushing past them and up to Teiran, who looks at me smugly.

"It looked like that was going to work in your favor for a minute." He says. I nod in agreement.

It was stupid, but a part of me wanted her to be jealous. I mean, it was the only reason I did it. Several times I could swear she felt the bond, but she acts like she can't like there is nothing between us. Not that the past week has helped with any of that.

And again, it's not like I can have her. A mate deserves to be protected, someone strong enough to save them when they need it, and I failed one mate already. My fate should have been the same as hers and yet I am meant to live with the pain of my failure. Why else would the moon goddess keep me alive?

"Stop..." Teiran says, his hand coming up to block us.

"What is it?" Kyra asks.

"Someone is in the woods, and they

are close Flora says from the ground We all look down and see her kneeling, hands to the ground as her eyes grow cloudy and she hums under her breath. en FindNovel

"Ezrah." Kyra whispers to herself.

"They are moving, but slowly," Flora continues. "One person."

"Direction?" I hiss out and she turns her head as if trying to hear better.

"That way," Kyra whispers, pointing to the left. A moment later, Flora nods in agreement.

"Yes. I would agree with Kyra." She says, coming back up.

"I guess there is a first for everything." Teiran mutters and Kyra shoots him a scowl.

I walk in the direction they indicated, my steps measured and quick as Kyra rushes over and steps in front of me.

"Where are you going?" She hisses, her eyes looking over my face as I exhale.

"To spy." I tell her, and she rolls her eyes, scoffing.

"I am the tracker so I will be the one going-" Her words drift off as I take an intimidating step toward her, rolling my shoulders back and saying nothing as if I will step through her. "Over my dead body." I tell her, and she grunts, slapping her forehead.

"That's the problem, isn't it? I have to

go because

can't trust you to come back with information we need. Who is to say you won't go and fight him and

and then leave us with your

die a

body and have to track him down

again?" She says, looking me dead in

the eyes.

"I will come back." I tell her, but I can see there is no trust in my words. Not after the two times she was forced to save me as I tried to loophole my way out of this miserable life.

"Hayes," she says, sucking in a deep breath as if she is trying to calm herself down before she exhales. "I can not trust you, so I am going to need you to trust me. Okay?"

My stomach twists hearing those

words, and my heart hurts knowing how true they are. I have done

nothing to earn her trust. But she has done nothing to lose mine, which means we are stuck with only one option. Me standing around and

waiting for her to report back. Me trusting her even when my not wanting to go alone doesn't feel like a trust issue but more of a protective one.

"Fine." I sigh, nodding as her mouth falls open.

"Fine?" she whispers, and I frown.

"I trust you, Kyra." I tell her, stalking closer to her, "But know that if you don't come back in an hour, I will be coming for you."

"Three hours." She says firmly, and I bark out a laugh.

"Two hours." Teiran chimes in. "No more and no less."

"So we are just going to hang out here for two hours?" Flora scoffs.

"No, you are coming with me." Kyra smirks and she squawks in disbelief. "Me?"

"Yep. you." Kyra says, grabbing her wrist and dragging her away in a sprint.

## Chapter 174

\*Kyra\*

"I know what you are thinking." Flora chimes from behind me.

It takes every ounce of me to only roll my eyes and not let out an annoyed groan. We are supposed to be moving in silence, but I suppose I did this to myself by taking someone I don't know. Then again, that's exactly why I dragged her along. I don't trust this Fae. "That you should shut your mouth?" I whisper and shoot her a scowl over my shoulder.

The ground rustles behind me and I close my eyes, my heading turning from side to side as I try to release the tension of being stuck with her. I did this to myself, not Hayes or Teiran. But me, okay, not entirely true.

I did this because Hayes was being a dick and trying to make me jealous. Which only makes him more of a dick, because who does that? Why would he want me to admit I am his mate so he can just reject me and die? How heartless does one have to be to force someone to feel something and then go and hope they die?

"Look, I am sorry." She whispers, her feet shuffling as she comes up close behind me. "It was a bitchy thing to do, trying to seduce him."

I bark out a laugh, trying to pretend it doesn't bother me. We both know I am using my bad attitude as a shield, but when you have no other armor, you grab the closest thing you can find, no matter how flimsy it is. "Seduce him all you want, Flora." I mutter. "It's not like I want to care about him."

She goes silent at my side and I glance over, watching as she frowns and then she opens her mouth to speak before snapping it shut.

"What?" I groan, dragging my hand over my face as exhaustion hits me.

"It's just that I thought-" She pauses, inhaling deeply before she presses her lips together as if weighing how to say what is on her mind.

"We should head back soon." She shakes her head. "That's all. We have been gone for forty-five minutes."

"Yes, forty-three glorious silent moments." I mutter, ignoring her suggestion. There is not a way in hell I am heading back without something. Either a hint or clue. Hell, even just the slightest sign that someone was nearby.

"Look, if we were going to find him, we would have seen something by now." She says, walking in front of me. Suddenly, her demeanor changes and her eyes grow cloudy. She goes vacant as if she is using her powers, yet I don't see anything out of the ordinary. Until a shiver runs down my spine and I realize she felt it first.

The way the forest has gone silent where birds had been chirping and squirrels scurrying up the trees, their nails scraping over the tough bark of the pines around us. A breeze stirs around us and I try to catch a glimpse of it in the tree, looking for swaying branches or pine needles tumbling down.

Instead, I find them as still as a frozen pond in a winter storm. My skin prickles and my lycan paces in my mind on high alert. We are being stalked and had Flora and I not stopped to argue, I may not have noticed, as I was too caught up in my annoyance.

Shit. This is why Tyler was also so much better than me. He could objectify, keep emotions out of his tracking, and yet I constantly find myself bogged down by them.

"Someone is here." Flora whispers, her hand grabbing my wrists as she steps a little closer.

"No shit," I grumble, trying to focus on the scent, following the point at which it is the strongest to pinpoint exactly where this person is and if it could be Ezra.

The tiniest smell of smoke and hot rock tickles my nose and my stomach falters. It is him. There is no doubt in my mind or nose that Ezra is not here using his ability to move incredibly fast to try to intimidate us.

"Be ready to use your skills." I whisper low to Flora.

I back away from her, extracting my wrist from her nervous hand before I take a step closer to the breeze.

"There is no need for a show, Ezra." I say, trying to sound bored as I place my hands on my hips. "I am not afraid of you."

"You should be." He says, his voice a soft echo making it damn near impossible to distinguish the direction from which it came.

"I just want to talk to you." I shrug, turning slowly in a circle, my eyes focusing on a blur as it comes to a stop behind a tree.

"Is that why you brought a new friend? Not your angry little beta?" he chuckles, his voice echoing around me regardless of the lack of things for it to echo off.

Ezra is trying to shake me up, but what he doesn't understand is that I have fought dragons and even threw myself back into a damn mudslide to save someone else. At this point, I am pretty sure my sense of danger meter is damn near ruined. "I brought Flora because she has a special skill set that I thought would come in handy."

"Ah, come in handy for capturing me?" He asks, his voice higher pitched at the end like he is amused.

"Well, if you would just come and have a little civil chat, I am certain we could come to some kind of agreement." I mutter, taking a risk and stepping closer to the tree where I am sure he is. As I jump around the trunk, I find nothing, and I hiss in annoyance as he cackles through the woods. "I have nothing to discuss with you," he answers, at least not with you.

"Then who do you want to talk to?" I ask him and he finally steps into view, leaning on the side of a tree with his hands shoved in his pocket.

The fae is devilishly handsome, I will give him that, but it seems to me like his personality is about as dull as his eyes that look so tired. Fae are used to more extravagant lives, it seems.

"Perhaps your alpha?" His voice grows closer, coming from behind me.

"Ah yes, I heard you two were friends once." I say, my eyes settling on Flora, who meets my gaze.

Her head nods, almost indiscernible

I

what she wants from

as I decipher what

me. I glance over my shoulder, noting a movement between trees and I realize she can see him. Be it the two of them being the same species or her part of her special skills, I don't care because now. Now I have eyes on him too, which brings a smile to my lips.

The ground slowly moves, the earth creaking and snapping beneath me as if the roots of the trees are alive. Just as Ezra goes to move once more, sprint to where he is going and hestops a hair away from me. His eyes grow wide in surprise, looking down at me as he takes a single step backward to avoid me.

"What? Did you think you could outrun us forever?" I ask him, clicking my tongue against the roof of my mouth.

"Out run?" He smirks, trying to mask the way he seems to panic as his fingers twitch. "My kind can and will always out run your kind. But I will admit you are rather adept for being part dog."

"Really?" I frown and scoff as if he is a disappointment. "All this time alone in the woods to think of witty comebacks and you went with calling me a dog?"

His eyes narrow and I can see how flighty he is. His pupils quiver as if he is on a vibration plate, and then a small smirk rises on his lips.

"You don't think you actually have caught me, do you?" he whispers.

"Sorry to disappoint you, but I am not letting you out of my sight again," Then I lunge forward, my arms wrapping around his waist as we fall backwards.

Roots erupt from the earth, dirt flying through the air and raining down on us as we lift into the sky, tendrils of the ground weaving around my body and his as they squeeze and I fight for air.

Ezrah roars out in anger as I try to fight my way out and away from him. I knew Flora would use her skills to capture him, but I had hoped she would be a little more accurate. When I look at her, I find her eyes glazed over and her body trembling. "Flora!" I shriek, trying to get her attention, but she remains unmoved before her mouth falls open and she lets out a pained scream.

"Help me!" she roars, her white out eyes growing blood shot as she drops to her knees.  
"Kyra, Please!"

My lycan roars out, my head whipping back as I shift and tear through the roots, only for them to be replaced just as fast as they come. I growl in anger, unsure of what the fuck is happening and how we ended up like this.

My front leg snaps, the pain shooting through me as I gnaw on limb after limb only to see Ezra somehow nestled safely in a little bubble, as though she is protecting him.

For a moment, I think Flora has

betrayed me until I see that the pain

she is in is real, as is mine. So I search the woods, remembering that there are more than just our kind out here fighting. And that's when the bastard steps out of the woods, his hands outstretched and his lips moving, murmuring

incoherent words.

The roots squeeze me tighter, wrapping around my upper leg as I whimper and whine, trying like hell to struggle out of her possessed grasp. A snap breaks through the air and bile rushes up my throat as my lycan retreats and I slip through the roots, crashing into the ground with a pained thud.

My leg is broken, as is my arm, but I force myself to look up, watching as a root makes its way behind the wizard who came out of fucking nowhere. And then it pierces him through the heart. The roots stop, and he drops to his knees and sputters out blood with a weak cough and tumbles to his side.

## Chapter 175

shelter she made for him, but a quick look satisfies my fears he may escape.

I crawl on my stomach toward Flora, my broken leg dragging behind me as I groan in pain. Flora looks drained, her chest heaving up and down wildly as she kneels slumped forward, her hair askew and in covering her face. I can hear Ezra battering against the rooted "Flora," I whisper, dragging my body up and next to her as I hesitantly reach out and touch her back. She jumps, a frightened scream breaking from her lips before she seems to see me, and she relaxes.

"I was worried you were dead," she whispers. "I was afraid to look."

"You know, for a little bit, I thought you were trying to kill me." I chuckle and her face grows pale, her eyes darting away.

"Not intentionally." She mutters, a shudder raking through her body as she stares at the dead man laying on the ground. "What the hell was that?"

"Ah, you've never felt mind control before." I give her a soft smile.

Tears leak from the corner of her eyes as she tries to fight back a sob.

"I'm sorry." She murmurs.

"I'm just glad you came to your senses and killed him in time." She blinks at me, her brows knitting together.

"I did?"

A strange sensation flutters over me and I hug myself, feeling vulnerable. So much weird shit has been happening. Well, weird, I suppose, is normal, but this level of it is. Well, it's unsettling.

"One of your roots...I could have sworn it was you." I mutter, and she frowns.

"Maybe?" she says, but her words lack confidence.

"Crap." I groan, laying down on my back, my hands on my head as I try to calm my senses.

My lycan is exhausted and in pain. It is possible that someone else killed the wizard, likely another fae, but all worries fade away when Ezra roars in frustration. I smile wide, a giggle bubbling up as, for a moment, I celebrate our little victory. "We caught him." Flora whispers, looking down at me. I nod, a victorious grin on my face.

"Hell yeah we did." I tell her and she exhales.

"Should we look at the wizard?" Flora asks, scrunching her nose in distaste.

"To make sure he is dead?" I ask her and she nods.

"What if he isn't? My mind is mine, not anyone else's to toy with. I have worked too hard for control and he...he..." She pauses and chuckles as she wipes tears from her eyes.

"Hey," I say, sitting up and leaning in to look at her. "It's fine, okay? I will go check to make sure he is dead."



There is no way I can stand yet, not with how and where my leg broke. A broken tibia or fibula? Small and quick. But a mid femur break and likely not a clean one? There will be no walking for me for several hours. I shuffle over to the dead hooded man, coming up close to his body as I reach for his injury.

My fingers slip through the gaping wound in his chest. Blood covers my hand when I pull it out and then I reach for his neck, feeling for his pulse. Not that I need to really check it. A wound like his would be fatal even for a lycan. His face is pale, almost gaunt looking, as I peek at him, feeling no pulse as expected.

He is dead. There is not a single doubt about it. But the problem now is HOW he died. I had assumed it was Flora who beat his hold on her and found a way to save herself. But with her confession that she doesn't recall it...I'm not so sure.

"Is he dead?" Flora calls out to me.

"Definitely." I tell her, and she seems relieved. "Can you come look at him? See if you know him."

Her eyes grow wide and her face green as she shakes her head.

"No way!" She squeals, jumping up. "I don't know him. I can promise you that."

I frown at her and look back at the dead body before shoving away from him and dragging myself over toward Flora.

"How can you know if you refuse to look?" I ask her, my voice gentle as I try to be reassuring.

"Because I know!" she insists.

I press my lips together, realizing there is clearly something more going on. Either she knows this dickhead and refuses to admit it, or she is afraid to look at someone she killed. Well, if she is the one that killed him. Whatever it may be, it has me on my guard as I scan the trees around us. "Are you sure that thing will hold him?" I sigh, changing the topic, for now, as I point to Ezra.

"Yeah, for a little while anyway." She says, the relief on her face from me dropping the topic is incredibly apparent. "How do you plan to transport him?"

"That is not my job," I tell her, though I have been wondering the same thing.

Perhaps Teiran will be able to

manage him? Fly with him in dragon form in his claws? My plan was originally to use Terian to help

subdue Ezra, which, clearly, we net

ended up not needing. I smile to

myself, proud that we could not only capture him, but find him. It was complete teamwork and Flora

played a huge part in it. SEARCH the (f)indNOVEL.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

It feels strange, trusting people so easily, but I know it would make Tyler so proud. He always said that when you are able to trust yourself, it becomes easier to trust others. Admittedly, trusting myself these days has been rough. Hell, trusting myself since losing him has been rough.

"Can I ask you something?" Flora asks, plopping down onto the ground next to as we face Ezra, waiting for him to make a single attempt to free himself.

"Sure."

"Are we friends...?" She asks, and my mouth falls open, closing as I turn to look at her, watching her expression. Flora is serious, her eyes batting as she waits nervously for my answer.

"Uh, well... We can be." I tell her. It

should have been obvious that she didn't have any friends with the way she defended the deer she

demanding was her friend. I had net

e

thought she was maybe just a nature freak, or mentally unstable. But maybe she is lonely, just like I have been. How else would she not

know about the war?

"That would be awesome." She grins widely, her cheeks dimple and her eyes sparkle in excitement.

"Can I ask you a question now? As a friend?" I ask her and she nods.

"How old are you?" I ask her, and she tilts her head in thought.

"Only eighty-six." She smiles.

"Is that young, by your standards?" I ask. Everyone knows Fae lives longer lives, but for her to be eighty-six and look no older than twenty is insane.

"Yes." She nods. "I have lived out in these woods all my life. My mother did not believe in what the kings and queens were doing in our world. It may shock you but, I've never had a real friend before."

I let out a laugh.

"Oh, that is very shocking indeed." I chuckle as she shakes her head.

"Are you fucking SERIOUS!" A voice roars behind us, and my body shivers.

Flora looks at me, alarmed, and I give her a grin before I turn to look over my shoulder and look at a furious and annoyed Hayes.

"Oh hey, you made it." I say, flashing him a smug smile, relishing the look on his face when his nostrils flare.

"You are late." His voice rumbles through his chest as he stomps in my direction.

Before I can get a word in, he reaches down and lifts me up by the collar of my shirt. My eyes widen and my lips part as he gives me a shake, as if he is trying to capture my undivided attention. I wince, looking away as I bite my lip, trying to fight off the scream of pain. "We found Ezra," Flora jumps up, grabbing at his hands as if she is trying to free me.

"Then you should have come back!" He screams. "We have been searching everywhere for you both."

"How late are we?" I ask, my voice quivering in pain that makes him blink in surprise. His grip eases as he lowers me to my feet, my good leg bearing all the weight.

"Twenty-nine minutes." Teiran says, coming out from behind a tree, his eyes curious and his nose sniffing the air.

"So you came after us immediately after we left?" I scoff, shaking my head in disappointment.

Hayes releases me immediately, giving me a gentle shove that forces me to step back on my broken leg.

I scream in agony, my hands flying

out to hold my thigh as I sob, unable to fight the fears as the pain rocks through my body. I slam into the ground with my side, my head bouncing off a warm, soft ground

before I am lifted and curled into a chest. Hayes adjusts his hold on me and I realize I had made it to the ground. He had caught me.

"Shit, Ky. Where are you hurt?" He whispers, his forehead suddenly pressed to mine, sparks bursting through me as we both gasp at the touch. Hayes' nose gently rubs over mine, his breath heating my face as he tilts his chin and kisses my forehead like he might actually care about me. "My leg," I croak, trying to pull away from him, but he only tightens his grip.

"I'm not letting you go," He whispers, but there is an inflection in the way he says it, one that springs a hope I have fought for so long. The hope that maybe, just maybe, Hayes might finally want me.