



Chapter 4

Venus POV

Father looked at me with a raised eyebrow in amusement. "Give me a moment chickee," he said, and continued talking to the Alpha.

Luna Marie asked Eric to go to the wine cellar and fetch the best wine from there. As Eric left, she gave me a warm smile and hurried towards the kitchen. Taking a deep breath in, I watched my father talking to Alpha in hushed tones as my insides churned into a mess.

A few minutes later, my dad glanced at me and nodded towards the porch, telling me to come with him. I walked after him as Alpha Martin watched us both leave with a hint of a smile, sipping his whiskey.

As my father leaned on the railing, he said, "What is it, Venus?"

I clasped my clammy hands. "Father, I..." I fidgeted with my fingers. "I don't want to marry Aaron. He is Vicky's mate and marrying him would ruin Vicky."

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He is going to hate me for the rest of his life, and so will Vicky. Please father, don't push me into a lifetime of misery."

My father tilted his head as he stared at me tenderly for a moment. "Your mother and I had decided long back that Aaron would be best for you. I know that this is going to be hard for you and him initially, but I am sure that as the time progresses, you both will like each other."

"But daddy—"

"Venus!" he cut me off angrily. "This is a decision that the Elders have taken along with Alpha and Luna. I can't go against them. So this will happen! As for Vicky and Gaia, don't worry. I will convince them."

I winced, my teeth clenching.

"Help Luna Marie with dinner and then get ready for your first shift." Father walked past me, not listening anymore to my protests. I knew he was also bound to what Alpha and Elders had decided. He didn't have a choice, but why did I feel even he was a part of it?

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Since there was no room for discussion, I trudged to help Luna Marie with the dinner. Eric came over and soon we started bantering with each other. It was amazing how quickly we forgot about my predicament.

Aaron didn't return for dinner in time. I knew he must be with Vicky, nursing her wounded emotions. Though I felt horrible about it, how could I expect them to come to terms with this new arrangement so soon? Yet, the thought that he was with Vicky opened a pit of misery in my stomach. I felt like going to them and dragging him back here. Once again, my eyes filled with tears. Was this going to be my everyday routine? To pine for Aaron as he stayed with Vicky?

The dinner got over and we all went to the verandah at the back of Alpha's house for my shift. How was it going to be?

"Just stay calm and focused," my father advised. "Let her take over."

"Yes, there will be pain when you shift for the first time, but you'll love it," Luna Marie added as she looked at me warmly. Alpha Martin had curled his arm around her as if he owned her while sipping

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wine. The two were so gorgeous together. Secretly, I hoped Aaron was here with me. How could he stay away for so long? He was rude enough to avoid dinner as well. But that didn't deter his parents. It was like they were sure of what they were doing.

"Hey, I want to be there for her first shift!" Eric barged in.

Alpha Martin chuckled. "Who's stopping you?"

A few minutes before midnight, we all walked to the line of trees, where I noticed that a few clothes were already kept in a basket. After shifting back into our human forms, we all needed to change back.

Excitement warred with sadness as I ran my gaze around, hoping that Aaron would be here for my first shift, but he wasn't there. I blinked away the tears that were again threatening to come out. Taking deep breaths in, I focused on my first shift.

I tipped my head up and looked at the full moon. It was beautiful with the way it brightened the night sky. Its brightness was so intense that it made the stars around it fade in comparison. Its rays soothed me.

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"It's rare to have a full moon on your first shift," Luna Marie informed me. Surprised, I snapped my eyes at her. She chuckled. "Go on, feel your wolf."

And I felt my wolf. It seemed like she was waiting to surface. Tingles spread across my body all the way down to my toes. A growl vibrated my chest and suddenly my bones cracked. A scream ripped from my throat as the bones cracked, fractured, and elongated. The pain accompanied by the transformation was excruciating. I just couldn't bear it. 'Let it go...' something whispered in my mind. My wolf.

My eyes were blurry when I blinked them to focus on my surroundings, but all I saw was an elongated muzzle. My arms and legs rippled with fur as my claws lengthened. A few minutes later, I was standing on my fours, my clothes shredded and tossed aside. Shocked, I turned my head to see that my father, Alpha, Luna and Eric were standing there with wide eyes, staring at me with wonder.

"I knew it!" Luna Marie squealed.

'Hi Venus,' my wolf said in my mind, diverting my attention. 'It's nice to meet you. I am Noira, your wolf.'

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Mesmerized by Noira, I replied, 'Hi Noira!'

Noira chuckled. 'Sit back and relax. We are going for a run.' Suddenly she took off on her fours with amazing speed.

As Noira ran, I couldn't help but wonder. All my senses had multiplied. The sounds of animals humming in the distance filled the air as the cool breeze caressed my fur, giving me a fresh feeling. With every step on the soft and inviting earth, my sense of smell sharpened. I felt like the owner of this world.

Noira ran for hours until she came to a small stream where she stopped to drink water. Footsteps approached behind me and I knew by the scents that they were the wolves of my father, Alpha and Luna.

A sad feeling encompassed Noira because she was hoping for Aaron to be there. My heart sank as her emotions permeated through me. 'He's a fool,' she said. Feeling dejected, Noira jumped over the stream and dashed off to the other side even as others growled in protest. I knew she was fleeing from that nauseating sensation, but were we truly liberated from it?

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I didn't know how long we ran, but we didn't want to return home. We must have lost others because I didn't hear them behind me. Tired and hungry, Noira lumbered beneath a tree where she sat down, crestfallen that Aaron was not interested in us.

Just as she tipped her head up to let out a howl, a black wolf emerged from the darkness. Tall and muscular, he slowly treaded to Noira, watching her intently with his amber eyes.

Noira stood up, growling, her defenses going up. However, her growls turned to yelps, and she wagged her tail when she realized it was Aaron's wolf. Had he come to take us back? Or was he here to witness my first shift?

He came to stand right in front of her and waited patiently, his eyes fixed on her. And then he let out a low, dangerous growl.