

CHAPTER 82

www.novelworm.com

82 Ava: Hospital, Again Vanessa looks at me with confusion etched on her face. I'd laugh a little, except I'm a little too worried about her calling me by a title I shouldn't have." "You're... not our Luna?" she asks, in this careful way that makes me think she's been told the exact opposite. Has Lucas been spreading the word that I'm his Luna? Because that seems a little presumptuous. No, not a little; a lot presumptuous. It's hard to be too angry when he risked his life to save me, but it's not impossible, so I seethe a little on the inside, shaking my head, There's a ringing in my ears and an increase in the throbbing ache of my face when I do, so I stop, holding up a hand instead. "No. No, I'm not." Vanessa's gaze goes from the top of my head, down my body, and eventually to the side of my neck, despite it being covered in bandages. Her brow furrows as she considers my words. 13:15 O < 82 Ava: Hospital, Again I take the opportunity to study her. She's cute. If she didn't smell like a wolf and I had to choose an animal for her to be able to shift into, I'd choose something tiny and fluffy, like a rabbit. Or a red panda. She has some curves to her and a soft face, with large, doe-like eyes and lashes that are too long to be real. Despite the lack of make-up on her face, I suspect she at least throws on some false lashes and mascara. I would, too, if I knew how to do it. Short eyelashes suck. "But you are Lucas' mate, aren't you?" Her question throws me off. I was too distracted by looking at her face and pondering if there was anything out there that could shift into a red panda. A lump forms in my throat at the mention of his name. Unable to meet her gaze, I lower my eyes to the light quilt over my legs. It isn't the kind you'd normally find in a hospital. Instead, it's a real blanket that you'd see in someone's home. Between that and the shirt I'm wearing, I have a feeling that I'm getting special privileges due to this misunderstanding. "Yes, I suppose, I don't sound very confident, because I'm not. 13.15 219 82 Ava: Hospital, Again "But?" Vanessa prompts, leaning forward. This is a conversation I'm probably going to have a lot in this place, so I take a deep breath, steeling myself for the admission that still stings, even after all this time. "He rejected me. Months ago." The fact that my voice doesn't waver a single iota is something I'm proud of. It's not my fault. He rejected me. That's a him problem, not a me problem. Right? Who rejects their fated mate? It's a question I've pondered thousands of times since it happened. I still don't know why. I just know that he showed up one day with apologies, before disappearing again. Of course, I was kidnapped before I could wait around for him to show up again, but—who knows if he even did? Dumbass. Of course he did. He came for you, didn't he? A frustrated sigh escapes me at the thought. None of this makes sense in my head, and I can't stand it anymore. 13:15 3/9 82 Ava: Hospital. Again Vanessa's expression shifts to one of amused thoughtfulness, and I can't help but wonder what's going through her mind with my admission. Before I can dwell on it further, she seems to shake herself out of her reverie and refocuses her attention on me. "Well, that's a story for another time," she says with a small smile. "For now, let's take a look at your injuries." She moves closer to the bed, and I brace myself for the inevitable discomfort. My entire body protests movement, and I can only imagine how much it's going to hurt with her hands on me. Vanessa is gentle as she peels back the fabric of the oversized shirt, revealing crisp white bandages wrapped around my midsection. "You sustained some pretty severe gashes here," she explains, her fingers lightly tracing the outline of the bandages. "Claw marks, confirmed." I nod. I remember getting the injury. "And these..." She gestures toward my face, neck, and shoulders, where I can feel the stinging remnants of bite marks. "These were mostly caused by teeth, it seems. Nasty pieces of work, those bites." 13.15 419 82 Ava: Hospital, Again I nod again, not trusting my voice at the moment. The pain is manageable, but the trauma lingers. Having a flash of those teeth snapping at me, sinking into my neck, my face, my shoulders... It's a lot. Vanessa's expression turns grave as she continues her assessment. "Unfortunately, there was widespread infection, particularly in the wounds where you were bit. It set in rapidly. You've had a high fever for two days, and coded once on your way to the hospital." I blink. "Coded?" I died? She grimaces. "Yes. Between your blood loss and the rapid infection, your heart rate ceased to exist for a short time." 2 My stare is probably rude, but—excuse me? I'd think I'd know if I almost died. It seems like that's the kind of thing that sticks with you for a while. "You were unconscious," she adds helpfully. "Thankfully

www.novelworm.com

Updates...@www.novelworm.com

www.novelworm.com

e got you stabilized just in time" She 13.15 5/0 < 82 Ava: Hospital, Again winks. "You're welcome. It was some of my best work." Trying to smile back is an effort, but I manage something that must pass muster, because she continues on, her face settling back into a professional mask. "We have you on antibiotics through your IV, which has helped a lot already. Your cultures should be back later today and we will be able to tailor your medicine to the infection. Right now, you're on three different broad-spectrum antibiotics to cover all bases." It's like I can understand every word out of her mouth, and yet she's speaking a foreign language. "... see? Thank you." The point is that I'm doing better, so I cling to that. "In bad news, you don't seem to have any accelerated healing. We hoped having Alpha's scent near you would help with that, but if you aren't mated, it's no wonder..." Her words trail off. "Well, I could get you a gown, if you prefer." "No, thank you." My refusal is swift, and my cheeks burn under her knowing scrutiny. My fingers, sore and bandaged from minor cuts that I can only assume 82 Ava: Hospital, Again come from the knife that I used to end Todd's life, pluck at loose threads in the quilt. There are none, but I pretend anyway. I'm too embarrassed. "His scent... um, it might not help with the healing, but it helps calm me down." Vanessa nods. "I understand. My mate's smell is like a natural Xanax for me." I nod along as Vanessa explains the treatment plan, her gentle voice and demeanor putting me at ease despite the unsettling details. Apparently, they can't close the gashes on my abdomen, and I just have to live with them draining and frequent changes of the dressing. It's a little daunting. Just as she's about to continue, the door to my room -swings open with a forceful shove. A tall, slender man strides in, his white coat billowing behind him. His angular features and neatly coiffed hair give him an air of arrogance that sets me immediately on edge. He doesn't spare me a glance, instead flipping through the chart in his hands with a look of impatient disdain. "Vanessa," he greets curtly, not even looking up. "I see 12 15 719 82 Ava: Hospital, Again you're still wasting time coddling patients instead of doing your job properly." Vanessa visibly bristles at his condescending tone, her lips pressing into a tight line. I decide then and there that I hate the man. "Dr. Ellison," Vanessa replies, her voice clipped. "I'm caring for our guest as any decent healer would." He scoffs, finally deigning to look at me with cold, appraising eyes. "Guest? She's a Blackwood." His gaze rakes over my bandaged form with unveiled disdain. "I'd have thought you'd want to prioritize your efforts for the patients who matter."@ The barb stings, bringing a flush of embarrassment to my cheeks. I open my mouth to protest, but Vanessa beats me to it. "She's Alpha Westwood's mate," she bites out. "I'd think even you would know to show some respect." Dr. Ellison's eyebrows shoot up as he turns an assessing look my way again. "His mate?" He scoffs. "Then where is the mating mark, Vanessa? Don't be so gullible." 13:15 8/9