

Chapter 7

KINGSTON

Sometimes instinct overrides logic.

That's the only explanation I can find for what happened this morning. Seeing Aeliana up close after so long stirred up some memories, memories that she ruined when she decided to show me her true colours.

It's been roughly eight hours since I left Aeliana's house, and I told Gamma Hartley to keep her in check. I knew marking her wouldn't stop her from leaving, it was just easier in the moment, I felt like I had something to prove. I shouldn't have marked her, I've been bathed in guilt since I did that.

I was hoping to avoid all contact when I arrived at the pack house but the moment I think I've done so, Audrey arrives at my door. "Hi babe," she beams, pushing her way inside.

"Audrey." I almost sigh. She can be a little overstimulating, more so after a day like the one I just had but her heart is always in the right place, it's what I like about her.

She throws her arms around me, trying to kiss me but I pull away. "Are you avoiding me?"

"No," I walk away, my mind going back to the Hartley mansion as soon as I sit down. "I'm just a little tired. I've been busy today."

Audrey pouts, arms crossed over her chest right beside me. "You're pushing me away." She says. And maybe I am.

I can still scent Aeliana like she were right next to me, and I didn't know how to come home and face Audrey while wearing Aeliana's scent so I

stayed away until I realised it wouldn't go away. ❸

"It's because of Aeliana, isn't it?" She swallows, her voice low. She always gets gloomy when she speaks of her, her demeanour changes entirely. "You-you're thinking of marrying her, right? I heard Uncle asked you to choose between her and the pack."

I shift, "Who told you that?"

"He said it at the wedding, and everyone has been talking about it." she shrugs. "Damien was also blubbering to everyone on his way out."

I hum in acknowledgement.

I was so out of it that I didn't notice Father declared I needed to choose in front of everyone. It makes the whole conversation with Audrey easier.

"What are you going to do?"

"There's only one thing to do."

She nods, ever so understanding. I don't think I deserve her, she's soft and kind in a way that makes saints look like they're not doing enough. "But Aeliana left."

My heart jots, "What?" I snap. Did she go through with her escape despite my warning? And if so, how did she get passed her Father? Surely, she can't go against him. That's her one flaw, one she always hated.

"I went to the Hartleys' to pick up something for Seraphine this morning and she was packing her clothes. I asked her where she was going and well, you know how she is..." she trails off, her fingers brushing over her arm. "She kicked me out and told me to return after she left."



My eyes zero in on some deep scratch marks, fresh but healing already. "Is that how you got this?"

"No," she shakes her head. "I got this when I tried to tell her to stay. She said it was none of my business and she would hurt me if I overstepped again."

I sigh.

It's not the first time that Aeliana has gotten aggressive with her. "You shouldn't have interacted with her, you know she's short-tempered."

"I just wanted to talk to her," Audrey swallows. "I figured it would be hard for you to speak to her and I don't want you to lose your inheritance. You've worked so hard to get here, you've done so much for the pack already co-running with Uncle Dante." Her face furrows, worry lines forming. "I know how much this pack means to you so I tried to talk to her, to ask her to accept the wedding."

"You're not upset?"

"I am," she admits, forcing a smile. "If you'd been mated to someone else then maybe I wouldn't be upset but Aeliana? That's a screw up by the moon goddess."

I nod. That we can agree on. "You shouldn't have gone to her."

"I'm sorry, are you angry?"

The moment I nod her face falls, and I have to clarify. "Not at you."

"Kingston, can I tell you something?" She asks, watching me closely. She waits for my approval before she proceeds. "I don't want to lose you to Aeliana, she will never allow me to see you," she says, her voice cracking. "She'd exile me from here when she becomes your Luna but



she has to be, for the pack.”

“She won’t be exiling anyone,” I assert. “Aeliana has no such power. I will marry her to appease my father and nothing more, we can’t be anything else.”

Audrey’s lip quivers, “I don’t know what I’d do without you. What will I do when you’re with her?” She swallows, hard.

Audrey and I got close during my training years, she started writing to me when I needed an anchor from back home and we’ve been close since then. She’s great, but our connection seems better on paper than it is now. Leaving her has never gone well, she got terribly sick and depressed the first time I did that but now it seems like the time to end things.

She must read my mind because she immediately shakes her head, “Please don’t break up with me.”

“You deserve to find love, Audrey,” I tell her, that’s more than she will have with me. I’m getting married, Aeliana and I will be bound for life no matter how much I hate the idea.

“I have it, with you.” she chokes out, tears streaming down her face as she drops to her knees in front of me, her hands resting on my legs. “I don’t want anyone else, I don’t care if you marry Aeliana and ten others, I just want to be with you. I’ll even style her myself for the wedding if you want me to but just don’t leave me.”

“Audrey—” my hand reaches out to wipe her tears but she clasps it in hers.