



Chapter 8: Leana

I begin coming in and out of consciousness, not sure why I feel so weak. I reach out to Kella and feel that she's just as weak as I am.

'Kella, what happened?' I ask.

'Mate,' is all she says before I'm out again.

When I finally open my eyes, I can't tell what time of day it is, as the sun is filtering through the trees above. Lily is sitting next to me.

"Lils?"

"Leana! Oh goddess! How are you feeling?"

"Weak, what happened?" I ask, still feeling like I have a fog in my brain.

She looks past me and I turn my head, seeing Drake sitting far away.

"Leana," I hear him say, his voice sounding like a sob. He gets up and leaves, making me worried that I'll never see him again.

"What were you thinking, Lea?"

"About what, exactly?" I ask, still feeling fuzzy.

"You let him feed on you," she hisses at me and everything comes flooding back. The moment Drake tasted my blood, I felt the power in him begin to push against me and Kella. It hadn't taken long before I realized we were in trouble. I had tried to push my aura against him, but he was draining my blood too quickly. Lily and Hera must have responded when I called out for help.

"I thought I could handle it. I thought the mate bond would help to keep



him sane. I underestimated his bloodlust. How long have I been out?"

"Hours, it's afternoon," she says, as we hear an animal scream in the distance.

Lily stands, ready to fight Drake as we hear him racing back. Instead, he stops, keeping his distance. Over his shoulders, he has a deer, a fresh kill for me.

"You need to eat," he says, throwing the deer at Lily's feet before stepping back and squatting down, keeping watch over me. I'm still too weak to sit up, but food will definitely help.

Lily cleans the deer and sets it over the fire to cook. As she's doing that, Drake races away again and when he comes back, his arms are full of firewood. Lily puts the wood on the fire and then helps me to sit, giving me some water. When the deer is cooked, she hands me several strips and eating helps me feel stronger as Kella continues to work on healing me.

"I think I can run a bit this afternoon, Lily," I tell her. She's on a deadline to get to her mate and I've just delayed her another day.

She argues at first, but I can tell she's anxious to get moving. I talk her into going slow and running for a couple of hours.

When we stop a couple hours later, I'm exhausted. Drake had run near us but continued keeping his distance. When I asked Lily about it, she snapped at me that she wasn't going to let him kill me on her watch.

Now, as he continues keeping his watchful vigil near me, I know Drake must be feeling guilty about nearly killing me and I need to talk to him. I eat some more of the deer meat that Lily had packed to bring with us and then I look at her.



"Can you give us a moment, Lily? And then, I think I can run a bit more today. If we rest periodically, I think I can run through the night to make up for the delay today."

I can tell she doesn't want to leave me alone with Drake. "Are you sure?"

"Yes."


"I'm not going far," she says, glaring at Drake. "I'm just going to check in with my father and I'll be back."

After getting her to agree not to talk to her father about Drake until I've had a chance to talk to my mother about it, she steps away.

When she's far enough away, I turn to Drake.

"It's not your fault."

"Of course it's my fault. I nearly drained you dry of blood, Leana. How can you say it's not my fault?" I can hear the anger in his voice, the anger at himself.

"I thought I could control it. Kella and I both did. We didn't realize how quickly you could drain our blood or how much you would desire it." 

His eyes flash red a moment before his fists clench. "Your blood is the most delicious taste I've ever had the pleasure of experiencing. It's so much more than even I expected, not just your delicious taste, but also the power and strength that comes from your blood."

He looks down. "I would understand if you rejected me. You should reject me. How can we ever have any type of relationship, especially now that I know how your blood tastes, Leana. You should reject me. I'll still make sure you make it to Araphyra safely. I'll still be there any time you need me. But you shouldn't feel the need to try and make me feel better about



nearly killing you because you have some mythical bond making you care about a monster."

"You're not a monster. And I forgive you. We know better now and yes, it's a bit disconcerting to think about you losing your mind in bloodlust again, but I'm also better prepared now, and so are you. I don't want to reject you, and I have no intention of doing so," I tell him.

He looks up at me and his eyes are pained. "I don't deserve someone like you. You're too good for me."

"I'll decide what I do and don't deserve. And I think there is good in you. You can't help what you are, but we can at least try to find ways to be together before just giving up. Don't you think?" I ask quietly.

I don't know what he would have said, but at that moment, Lily returns.

"Ready?" she asks, looking between us.

"Yes, let's go." I say, putting her bag over Hera and then shifting. Kella picks up our bag in her mouth and slowly walks to Drake. He takes the bag and puts it over her, taking the moment to caress her fur.

"I'm so sorry, Kella," he says quietly to her before standing.

We run for another couple of hours before I have to stop again. It's nighttime now and we make a fire. I'm exhausted and I lay down. When Lily steps away to call her father again, I call Drake over.

"Please come sit close to me. Your scent will help me and Kella heal faster," I tell him, knowing he's still trying to keep his distance. He comes to sit beside me, pulling his shirt over his head. I take a moment to appreciate his sculpted torso, Kella purring in my head at his physique. My fingers twitch to reach out and trace the lines of the muscles on his



body.

Instead, I take the shirt and put it under my head, making a pillow that will keep his scent in my nose all night. Kella grumbles that we didn't touch him, but it's too soon after the blood draining incident. If something were to happen, I know I'm not strong enough yet to fight back and Lily would probably kill him this time.

I close my eyes, reaching out my hand to touch his. He flinches away at first, then takes my hand in his.

When Lily gets back, he tells her that he'll keep watch.

"Are you sure? I don't..." she begins.

"I know you don't trust me. I understand. But I won't hurt her. She's my mate. I don't know how that will ever work with everything there is between us, but I never thought I'd have a mate. I don't want to lose her," he says and I open my eyes to see him looking down at me as I lay beside him.

"Then I suggest you keep your fangs out of her." Lily snaps at him. I hear her getting settled as the two of them decide to let me sleep through the night, that they will take turns keeping watch.

I shift closer to Drake, his cold body on one side, the heat of the fire on the other. At some point in the night, I end up with my head on his chest, the scent of his body much stronger than the shirt.

When I wake the next morning, I feel rested and much stronger. The mate bond, sleep and food have done the trick.