

458 Mami

Eve 1

I went down to little Sophie's level, my voice cajoling. "Little star," I murmured.

Her brown eyes searched mine, looking for what I hoped was trust. And she could. I desperately hoped she knew that—even if we had only just met a few minutes ago. "What tunnels?" I asked.

I could feel Freddie's eyes drilling holes into my back, but he didn't dare move—not with Hades still pinning him in place.

Sophie suddenly looked smaller, as if she were caving into herself. She pursed her lips so tightly they began to tremble. The tunnels meant a lot to her, and because of Freddie's fear-mongering, they had become sacred—something she felt she had to protect from us.

I gathered myself together, Rhea whispering in my head, sharing insights.

> "The tunnels are connected to her mother and her pack, so of course she feels it's her obligation to keep them safe from what she perceives as certain danger."

> "Why would we be a danger to the tunnels?"

> "Evie," Rhea's voice felt like soothing hands on my shoulders, like she was bracing me. "Didn't you yourself once fear the people of Obsidian and what they represented to you?"

My eyes widened as it finally sank in.

> "It's the same reason Cain hid his little girl from his own brother."

To her, we were the foes—the Lycans she was always taught to fear. Just like I had been since birth. And in that moment, in the innocent eyes of the little hybrid daughter Cain had kept secret all her life, I saw my own reflection.

A girl taught not only to hate, but to fear.

No matter the connection Hades had with her as his niece, we were strangers.

As I heard the footfalls of the other guards approaching, I smiled at her—wide and warm.

And I watched a sparkle dance in her gaze. "Your teeth," she breathed, eyes widening. The chestnut in her irises seemed to whirl. "You don't have... pointy teeth." She reached for my face with trepidation, as though unsure of what she was seeing. "Fangs. You don't have them."

Her voice was light with wonder. "Like me." She bared her own teeth to show me. Her canines weren't elongated like Cain's—they were short, like a werewolf's.

She looked to Hades and said, "You have pointy teeth. You're like Papa." Then her eyes darted back to me. "You don't have pointy teeth. Like me. Like Mami."

Sophie blinked up at me, her little face crumpling in thought. Then her voice dropped to a whisper so faint I almost missed it.

"Like Mami?" Her brows furrowed, eyes darting toward Hades before returning to me, as if she were hiding a secret. "Are you... a werewolf?"

I hesitated, but the way her small hand hovered near mine—trembling with hope—gave me no room to lie. I nodded gently. "Yes, little star. I am."

Her eyes lit up, wide as moons. She leaned closer, lowering her voice to a hushed rush, as though the walls themselves might tell on her. "Are you... from Silverpine Pack?"

My chest tightened, but I answered softly, "Yes."

Sophie gasped, delighted. She bounced once on

her toes, but then her smile faltered. Her gaze flicked between me and Hades, worry seeping into her features. "But... how?" she whispered, confusion threading her tone. "How can you be with a Lycan? Mami always said... we weren't supposed to like them very much."

Her innocence twisted like a knife. I reached out, brushing my knuckles over her cheek. "Because nothing should dictate who we love, little star. Not rules. Not fear. Nothing stopped your mama from loving your papa, did it?" 1

Sophie's lips parted, and slowly, she nodded, as though the weight of that truth was something she could feel in her tiny chest.

"To trust someone is to choose them," I said softly. I gestured toward the armored figures behind me. "Just like you trust your guards. They are Lycans with pointy teeth too."

Her head whipped toward them, eyes sparkling. "Freddie likes me," she declared with absolute confidence. "He keeps me safe. Or my papa will make him pay."

The stoic guard didn't flinch, his face carved from stone. But Sophie, sharp as only a child could be, leaned in and winked, both eyes



squeezing shut. "I know you're not like the other Lycans," she whispered to him, voice conspiratorial. Then she grinned, her small teeth flashing. "You're like Papa."

For just a fraction of a second, the corner of the guard's mouth twitched—an imperceptible curl that might have been a smile, or a threat, or both.

"Alpha... Luna, you will have to leave. The young miss—" another guard began, but I cut him off.

"She's coming with us to the Obsidian Tower."

I watched their jaws clench. "With all due respect, Luna, that will be impossible."

Hades countered, his voice calmer than mine. "I fully understand that she's your responsibility, but my brother would want her safe with us until his return. That was why he told me of her."

Their eyes narrowed. "May we ask where the Don is, Alpha?"

Hades seemed to deliberate how much to reveal. "On a mission. In Silverpine Pack."

Their reaction was instant, though they tried to mask it. Their bodies tensed, and the shock showed in the sharp rise of their brows.

Sophie broke the silence first. "He's in Mami's pack?" she asked.

All our gazes fell on her. Her eyes filled with questions.

Sophie had made her first mistake—slipping about the tunnels. Using Hades' old technique of bulldozing through Cain's network, he could easily find out what he needed.

But I could see it in Hades' eyes—he didn't want to exploit her innocence or excitement to uncover something that clearly meant so much to her.

Maybe it wasn't Alpha Hades, the figure Sophie had been taught to fear, but Uncle Luci—the one she trusted enough to reveal a sacred secret connected to her mother.

Hades wanted to do right by her.

His guilt was as palpable as the tension. He finally replied, "Yes, little star," he muttered. "He's saving werewolves—more werewolves like your Mami."

The guards reacted but said nothing. They seemed surprised—but not entirely.

"Really?" Her eyes gleamed. "Because he couldn't



save Mami? Are more people like Mami in danger?" she asked.

He couldn't save Mami.

The words echoed in my head like drums in a cathedral.

Was she...?

"The tunnels are where she escaped to when she fled Silverpine," Freddie finally stepped forward. 1

Comment 2

View All >



Leave the first comment for this chapter.



Vote

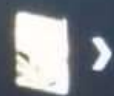


Fandom



Send Gift

Book Badge



Swipe left to continue >